
DALLY

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BY

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"ROWENY IN BOSTON" "KATHARINE NORTH"
"MRS. KEATS BRADFORD" ETC.

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DALLY

I

THE WIDDER 'BIJAH'S GUEST

WHEN people wished to speak of Mrs. Abijah Jacobs in a way that was at once descriptive and polite, they called her a "widow lady." It was universally felt that the term widow by itself did not sufficiently indicate that the bereaved object was an individual of the human species, and of the female sex. There were some who allowed themselves to say "widow woman," but these were careless in their speech, and not to be considered on this occasion.

In common, everyday talk, however, Mrs. Jacobs was always mentioned as the "Widder 'Bijah," to distinguish her from two other women who had married men by the name

of Jacobs in Ransom, and from whom Providence had wrested their partners.

The Widder 'Bijah was fat and thrifty, and had a shrewd cast to her right eye which gave her an appearance of winking sometimes when she would not have winked for all the world. It was by reason of the appearance of this eye that Mr. H. F. Turner, proprietor of the one store at Ransom, a widower—I am tempted to say a widower gentleman—was impressed with the ineradicable conviction that Mrs. Jacobs encouraged him even at the very funeral of Abijah, on which occasion he acted as one of the bearers. It is probable that nothing will ever convince him that he was not winked at at that time. It is true that when he called, on the strength of that look, a week or two later, the coldness of his reception was not favorable to the belief he had formed. Mrs. Jacobs was hardly civil, and she persevered in that manner on all the occasions when she was obliged to go to his store. Notwithstanding all this, though Mr. Turner did not again call, with true masculine self-appreciation he always had a firm belief that Mrs. Jacobs really was fond of him, but that for some reason she

had made up her mind not to yield to that fondness, and when this woman had made up her mind, all who knew her said "it wa'n't no use." So H. F. Turner turned his thoughts towards some one else who, though a good housekeeper, had not so much of this world's goods.

In the year following the death of Mr. Jacobs his relict had several opportunities to marry again. It appeared to be understood in the neighborhood that the time to console a widow was when she was mourning; it was not wise to wait till she began to "perk up of her own self."

But Mrs. Jacobs refused all offers of consolation. She said she could take care of herself, and she could take care of her farm, and she guessed somebody else would suit better.

She went to every service which was held in the Congregational Church at Ransom. She was always present at the Tuesday evening prayer-meeting, at every "preparatory lecture," at the Sunday-school, even at the choir-meetings, where she sat and heard the sopranos try to toss their voices entirely out of reach of the bass and alto singers. She

invariably contributed ten cents to everything. She bought a ticket every time there was an "apron-party" or a "necktie-party" in the vestry, such entertainments being of frequent necessity in order to eke out the minister's salary. But she never went to those parties. She said she would rather "set 'n' toast her feet to home." So she gave her ticket to some young person to whom it was a treat to see and hear three or four "fellers and girls" speak a dialogue which they had imperfectly learned, and where they were sure to giggle in the wrong place.

She was one who said she was "bound to do good if it killed her." She would allow paupers from the almshouse, who were "longing for a change," to come to her house and make long visits. What she endured with some of them she never told any one. The utmost she was ever heard to say on the subject was after a particularly trying visitation, when she remarked that she had made up her mind that "there was generally a reason why folks come on to the town; it wa'n't all misfortune; there was some deviltry mixed up with it."

Thus it was natural enough that Mrs. Lander, who lived in New York, and who board-

ed with the Widder 'Bijah a few weeks in summer, should send Dally out to the old farmhouse in Ransom. Mrs. Lander found Dally on "White Crow Mounting," living a brute's life with a woman called "Ole Tid" and a boy named Barker, who was said to be Dally's brother. White Crow Mounting was one of the most picturesque spots in Western North Carolina; picturesque spots sometimes harbor strange vermin.

The child was almost like a little flower to look at. It is the owners of pretty faces who stand the best chance of being rescued from unhappiness. Mrs. Lander took Dally; she left Barker to get along as best he might. She forgot the boy, who was not interesting, though perhaps he also had a soul to save. But the lady may have thought she could not save all those wretched mountain children, so she would select a pleasing specimen.

"Yes, send her on," wrote Mrs. Jacobs in answer to Mrs. Lander's letter.

The work-worn heart leaped in a strange way when the sharp, kindly eyes above it looked out of the window one rainy morning a whole day earlier than the child had

been expected. Those eyes saw a girl of thirteen or fourteen, completely covered by a plaid cloak too large for her, with hair and eyebrows dripping with rain, trying to open the gate which led to the neatly-kept door-yard.

The Widder 'Bijah dropped the strip of rug she was braiding and hurried to the door.

"Lift up the latch from the inside," she cried out. "It kinder ketches when it's wet."

"Yes, ma'am," answered a sweet voice; and, the latch having been lifted from the inside, the new-comer walked up the narrow planking that made the path, and held out an envelope addressed in Mrs. Lander's tall, angular handwriting.

"I s'pose you come from North Caroliny?" said Mrs. Jacobs.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Come right in 'n' take off that drippin' cloak; 'n' I s'pose your feet are soppin' wet, ain't they?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The girl still stood hesitating at the door of the kitchen, and when Mrs. Jacobs put out her hand and drew her forward she shrank

back involuntarily, as a horse will shrink which has been treated cruelly.

"For mercy's sake, child, you don't expect I'm going to strike you, do ye?" cried the woman, her quick eyes rightly interpreting the movement.

The kind voice made Dally tremble.

"Yes, ma'am," she said, humbly, "I reckoned yo' war gwine ter hit me. I'm used ter bein' hit."

"Gracious!"

With this exclamation Mrs. Jacobs almost roughly removed Dally's cloak and hat, which articles she carried from the room and hung in the porch. She stood there a moment looking at them.

"It's the dearest little face I ever saw," she whispered to herself. "She'll make a fool of me, I know. I always was weak-minded 'bout them faces with soft white skin, 'n' light hair, 'n' brown eyes. Oh, I do hope she won't turn out to be an imp of Satan! She's a regular heathen, of course. I'll take her to the choir-meet'n to-morrer night. I s'pose she never lived on much but clay yet."

It was Mrs. Jacobs's conviction that peo-

ple who dwelt in the Southern States, which she invariably spoke of as "below Mason and Dixon's line," were always clay-eaters. In this particular instance this article of diet had produced a pleasing effect.

In ten minutes from her arrival Dally was sitting with her feet on the kitchen stove, a little shoulder-shawl belonging to her hostess over her, while she sipped some ginger-tea. It occurred to Mrs. Jacobs that ginger-tea would counteract any ill effects which might come from change of climate.

Dally drank the tea as copiously as she could. She finally held out the huge bowl towards her companion and said, piteously, that she did wish she had "er bit er corn pone, 'n' er drop er grease. She was that hungry she b'lieved she could chaw urp er mule-strop."

Mrs. Jacobs started and said: "Gracious!" again, much as a man might have said, "the devil!"

She darted to the buttery, and brought out a plate of cold corned beef and one of bread. The child attacked the food like a famished creature, and Mrs. Jacobs stood looking at her.

"I almost was afraid you wouldn't know what to do with Yankee victuals," she said at last, and then added, "but I see you do."

"Yes, ma'am," said Dally, with her mouth full.

When she had eaten more than she had ever eaten before at one time in her life, she leaned back in her chair and said, with precisely the same manner with which she would have asked for a drink of water:

"Please, I'll have just er sup at some whiskey now. Don't go ter weaken' it noan."

The Widder 'Bijah seemed to grow pale as she heard those words from those lovely pink lips. She belonged to all the temperance societies that had ever been started in Ransom. She did not believe that anything save the last stages of consumption would justify a person in taking whiskey.

Dally, meeting that horrified look, gradually grew redder and redder, until at last she put her grimy, hard little hands over her face and burst into violent weeping, crying out in a strangled voice that she "wa'n't no pison adder that she must be looked at like that!"

Mrs. Jacobs was wise enough not to say anything on the subject. She advised that the child should lie down on the lounge and take a nap, as she must be all worn out.

When Dally was fast asleep, which was immediately, Mrs. Jacobs drew out Mrs. Lander's letter from her pocket and sat by the lounge with it in her hand for some time before she opened it. She was gazing at the face on the patchwork pillow; for the moment all the shrewdness was gone from her eyes, and only the kindness remained. The daughter she had never had, but whom she had longed for through years of practical humdrum life, almost seemed before her now in the person of this little waif from North Carolina. Oh, yes, she would take her, she would keep her. No need to ask if she would keep her. The child was no better than a heathen, no doubt, and must be converted and go to all the meetings, and in due time be a member of the church. But how and where did she get that bewitchingly sweet face and that bewitchingly sweet voice? How could she creep straight into one's heart, as she had done now? Why was there not something coarse in her feat-

ures or in her expression? And she asking for whiskey?

If Mrs. Jacobs could have seen Dally's mountain home and Ole Tid, she would have asked these questions even more emphatically than she had now asked them.

Mrs. Lander wrote in a rather sentimental way that she hoped and believed that Dally would be like the perfume of a rich blossom in Mrs. Jacobs's life. She said, also, she should insist upon helping in the expense of bringing up the child, since her dear friend was so good as to take the care. And she enclosed a check.

The woman, reading the letter, felt a curious sensation of angry jealousy as she looked at the check.

"I ain't so poor but I can take care of her, I guess," she said, aloud. "And very likely I shall need a sight of patience, too," she added.

Before the next twenty-four hours were gone, she had an overwhelming sense that a "sight of patience," much as that was, was not enough. She would not tell any human being, but she told God in her prayers that, if He didn't send His grace down in running-

over measure, she did not know what she should do with that Caroliny gal.

But as she rose from her knees she breathed out, " I can't help loving her, though."

II

MRS. WINSLOW AND THE WIDDER DISAGREE

"I SHOULDN'T wonder if 'twas quite a spell before she was any comfort to ye. Did she do that?"

The speaker was holding up a strip of patchwork that was drawn and puckered until it bore no semblance whatever to the precious thing it ought to have resembled. She was standing in the Widder 'Bijah's kitchen, and the Widder 'Bijah was standing with her, and looking at the same piece of work left by Dally's hands when the girl started for school that morning.

"Did she do that?" repeated Mrs. Winslow, with even more severity.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jacobs, "she done that, and she really seemed to try."

Mrs. Winslow sniffed very audibly. She put down the dreadful strip of patchwork in the basket. She said there wa'n't no gal round but could have made a whole bed-

quilt long 'fore she was Dally's age. She said patchwork was the one thing it was necessary for a gal to know. She should have died of shame if Marietta had done that, and she motioned towards the basket.

"You must remember that Dally ain't had no bringing-up," said Mrs. Jacobs, in a depressed manner. "I guess there wa'n't never no Winslow but could have made calico squares in their cradles. You know Dally's nothin' but a Caroliny gal."

"You missed it dreadfully takin' of her. I feel to thank the Lord every day that I've ben saved from takin' of her."

"You've a great many mercies of that kind to be thankful for," returned Mrs. Jacobs, in a tone that made her caller cringe somehow, and which caused her to remember that she had, as she said, "some bread a-risin', and must hurry home."

At the door she turned back to ask if it were true that Dally hadn't no last name and no father.

Mrs. Jacobs's eyes flashed. The eye that naturally squinted opened very wide.

"Yes," she answered, "it's jest as true as that your father 'n' mother quarrelled so's

the neighbors had to interfere nigh every day of their lives. As for my part, I'd just as leeves have no father at all as one that 'd beat his wife with a beef's tongue, 's your's used ter; 'n' milk-pails throwin' at her head!"

Mrs. Winslow glared a moment, and then she hurried away, while Mrs. Jacobs went back to her kitchen and sat down to repent of her hasty speech.

She took up the poor little puckered sewing and looked at it. As she did so she recalled how Dally had cried because she couldn't make it even; how the small fingers had trembled in anxiety as they had worked.

Mrs. Jacobs had now had Dally nearly two weeks, and those weeks had been one round of excitement for the Yankee woman, who had never conceived that any human creature could be quite so ignorant and shiftless as this child was. Was it possible that there were people in the world who didn't know how to mix doughnuts; who thought corn-bread was better than "light-bread;" who called tomatoes "poma-toes;" who spoke of nothing as "meat" but bacon; who asked where things "were at;" who called going to meet-

ing "gwine to preachin';" who called a harness "the gears;" who spoke of kindling a lamp as "makin' er light."

Mrs. Jacobs dared not go on with this kind of meditation, for she felt if she did so she should flounder hopelessly in the accumulation of memories of the strange things Dally was saying and doing all the time.

Only the night before, it was not until Dally had gone to bed that she remembered that she had not brought in the dry wood for making the fire in the morning. Suddenly Mrs. Jacobs saw a figure with bare feet and in its night-gown flying through the kitchen and out of doors. Before she could collect herself and follow, Dally had returned, bearing an armful of "pine trash."

"I done forgot ter tote thur wood," she explained, and was going back to her bed with her feet wet with mud and snow.

She could hardly be made to comprehend why a tub must be brought and her feet washed.

"Mighty king!" she cried out at last, "we don't do that-a-way in Calliny. Ole Tid would er let me car' er load er mud ter bed f ır all of her a carin'."

It seemed incredible to Mrs. Jacobs that she must instruct a girl of fourteen that she should not go out in her night clothes of a March night and bring in wood, even though she had forgotten to do so previously.

"And as to that," went on the Widder 'Bijah, with painful earnestness, "don't ever get up, even in summer, and leave the house without dressin'. What shall I do with you? You make me think of the prayer-book Mrs. Lander uses."

Dally was sitting with her feet in a tub of water and with an enormous gray shawl, which had belonged to Abijah, wrapped around her shoulders. Her light hair was all in a fluff about her face, and her brown eyes were penitent and wondering. At this mention of the prayer-book she laughed a little. She said she didn't see how such a "triflin' critter" as she was could make anybody think of anything so good as a prayer-book must be.

Mrs. Jacobs could not help smiling fondly into those young eyes, which met hers so frankly.

"You needn't think that," she answered, laughing out as she spoke, with a sense

of happiness she could hardly understand. "'Tain't much of a compliment to you what I thought. 'Twas where it says leavin' undone things you ought ter do, 'n' doin' them things you hadn't ought ter do. You're up to that kind of actions 'bout all the time."

The smile died out of Dally's face.

"Yo' ain't gwine ter be sorry yo' took me, be yo'?" she asked, her lips quivering.

The thrifty Yankee looked at the "triflin' critter" and said:

"Sorry? Gracious, no! I'm thankful every day of my life. Though you be tryin', Dally."

The girl sprang out of her tub of water, making a dreadful splash as she did so. She flung her arms round her friend's neck and hugged her convulsively.

"I never knowed folks could be so good," she sobbed, "an' I do try every day not ter be so triflin'. Yo' see I was let to be so. I'm jest like er fyst I used ter have."

Mrs. Jacobs held her close a moment, and then she hurried her off to bed and returned to mop up the water which had been spilled. Something troubled her as she did so. When the floor was dry she hastened into the lit-

tle bedroom where Dally lay. She saw the shining of her eyes, so she had no hesitation in saying:

"Be you awake?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You said you was jest like a fyst. Now, what is a fyst?"

She anxiously awaited the reply, which came quickly enough.

"Law me! It's only er little dog. My Jinny was jest like that yo' said thur prayer-book said—an' like me, yo' know. Oh, I do wish I could have a pup! Bill Winslow's got two—houn's, they be. He said as he would like ter give me one. Kin I hev it?"

"You needn't have no Winslow pups," said Mrs. Jacobs, with some asperity. "But I'll see 'bout one, somehow."

When the widow looked in the room again an hour later, at precisely nine o'clock, she was surprised to find Dally still awake and evidently crying.

"'Tain't nothin' yo've done," she hastened to say, "but I war er thinkin' that mabby yo' couldn't hev both, er puppy an' Barker, an' I'd hev Barker—though I do lurv pups so! Ef yo' could hev him, yo' know."

"Who in the world is Barker?" questioned Mrs. Jacobs, in great surprise.

"He's my brother—down ter ole Tid's. He war left thur when thur lady took me."

But Mrs. Jacobs shrank from the thought of Barker.

"Is he like you?" she asked.

"He ain't nigh so pooty," was the guileless response.

"I think's likely," said the other, smiling.

"An' folks use ter say he war kind of er heifer, yo' know."

"Kind of er heifer?" repeated Mrs. Jacobs. "I thought you said he was your brother."

"Yes, ma'am. He is. But ole Tid, an' they, use ter call him 'Yo' sullen heifer, yo'.' But it war the way he war brought urp."

"I d' know what you mean."

"I mean they didn't like him," replied Dally, unable to explain that in North Carolina to call a person "a heifer," and particularly if you prefix the word "sullen," is to use a term of great reproach.

Mrs. Jacobs tucked the clothes round the girl, kissed her and told her they wouldn't talk any more that night.

It was all this, and more, which Mrs.

Jacobs was thinking about as she sat idle for a full half-hour after Mrs. Winslow left her. She did not wonder that the neighbors pitied her, and thanked God they had been spared the "takin' of Dally." But, as the lonely woman told herself, "they only saw the trial part of it; they didn't know anything about the comfort of it." What could they know of the thrill of long unused tenderness that woke in that heart when Dally put her arms round Mrs. Jacobs's neck and kissed her with a lavish fondness that could not be other than real?

The widow suddenly flung out one hand with a rare impetuousness of gesture.

"I don't care what they think, or what they say!" she cried. "I guess I know what I'm about, 'n' I'll keep the child if it kills me!"

It was really very wearing, however, to find the next day, which was Saturday, when there was no school, that the dinner dishes, which she had packed into the sink to be washed, were all gone. She knew Dally had not washed them. But where were they?

Mrs. Jacobs had just returned from running down the road to see how Miss Bently

was. Dally entered the house at about the same time, and was singing a camp-meeting tune. When asked where the dishes were, she responded promptly that she had just put them "in thur branch."

Poor Widder 'Bijah sat down suddenly, feeling weak and helpless. She asked what the branch was, and after some explanation she understood that it was the brook which ran at the foot of the hill back of the house. The dishes, including silver spoons, were deposited in the stream, that the running water might clean them. Not only had Dally done this thing, but she had advised Marietta Winslow to use the branch near her house for the same purpose, as dish-washing was so tiresome. The two girls were going to report to each other at school on Monday. But they were not obliged to wait until Monday. Before Dally and her friend could start to the brook in the hope of saving at least the spoons, the door was flung violently open, and Mrs. Winslow, gripping her daughter Marietta by the hand, entered.

Mrs. Jacobs immediately rose to the occasion. She felt that she might be put down by some folks, but not by old Silas

Jones's daughter. She told Mrs. Winslow she hoped she'd set right down and make her a little visit.

Mrs. Winslow snorted. She seemed struggling to speak coherently. At last she said it wa'n't no time for visitin'; that she s'posed all her pink chiny was gone to the old Harry, to say nothin' of her grandmother's silver spoons. "'N' all owin' to that Caroliny gal," pointing at Dally, who had exchanged one anxious glance with Marietta, and now stood with flushed face and drooped head.

Mrs. Jacobs was very calm, and almost sweet, as she advised her caller to wait a few minutes till she could speak a little plainer, 'n' not come so nigh swearin'.

Mrs. Winslow swallowed two or three times before she could say that she came to tell Miss Jacobs that "if she caught that Dally ever speakin' to her Marietta or any of her children again, she would—she would—" here she swallowed again and grew purple in the face, and could not finish her sentence.

Mrs. Jacobs waited in the same calm way. Mrs. Winslow twitched her daughter round

towards the door and then was able to say, over her shoulder:

"We had comp'ny to dinner, 'n' so 'twas our pink chiny that went into the brook."

Mrs. Jacobs followed the woman to the door.

"I should have thought," she said, commiseratingly, "that a gal brought up like your Marietta wouldn't have put chiny into no brook."

III

HOW DALLY KEPT HER PUPPY

"SHE'S a mighty thunderin' good woman, or else she's weak in her mind; 'n' we all know she's brighter 'n' all the rest of the female kind round here. That's my opinion."

As he was speaking, Mr. Peter Winslow, the husband of Mrs. Winslow, "she that was a Jones," and the father of Marietta, was slowly winding a long gray comforter round his neck, and standing heavily by the kitchen stove. Though it was the last of March, there was a "robin snow" falling outside, and Mr. Winslow was believed by his family to have a weak throat, though he never manifested any signs of such weakness.

"Yes," he repeated, looking somewhat belligerently at his wife, "I call the Widder 'Bijah a Christian woman, er takin' in that Caroliny gal; 'n' I'm goin' to give her that spotted pup. I seen she wanted it, 'n' Bill

said he b'lieved she'd give her eyes for it. I shall give it to her. I shall take it this morning. I s'pose you hear what I say?" again eying his wife, who was picking over a pan of beans and who now announced that she "wa'n't deef."

"All right, then. I'm goin' to give Dally that spotted pup. It'll make a good woodchuck dog; but I sh'll give it to her."

He kept tying and untying his comforter as he stood. He was afraid of his wife, but he had resolved as to what he would do with that puppy. He had been making up his mind for several days, and had only now got his courage to the sticking-point.

He walked as far as the door, and, as he raised the latch, he informed Mrs. Winslow that he "wa'n't goin 'to have no words flung at him after the thing was done."

He went out to the barn, and very soon was seen going through the yard with the dog in his arms.

"Marietta," said her mother sharply, "go 'n' tell your father I wanter see him."

The girl hung back, but she did finally run through the snow and give the message. Mr. Winslow was already covered

with the big, soft flakes. He was out of sight of his wife and so could summon courage to say he was in a hurry, and to stride on. His daughter hurried also and caught hold of his arm, whispering eagerly:

"You give it to her, pa! You give Dally the pup—and my love. Don't you mind ma!"

It was thus that Dally got the hound puppy, after all, and Mrs. Jacobs could not refuse it from Mr. Winslow's hands, though the appearance of that gentleman when absolutely in the act of bestowing his gift was probably akin to the aspect of Macbeth when doing the fatal deed. He tried, however, to put on a matter-of-course look of courage. Dally was hugging the puppy and almost weeping with joy over him.

Mr. Winslow pulled on his gray mittens. He felt the squinting regard of the Widder 'Bijah upon him.

"I hope," said she, "that your wife knows of this."

"I told her," said Mr. Winslow, bravely. He put his hands deep down in the immense pockets of his overcoat and added with visible importance: "My wife knows

her place too well to dispute what I decide."

He felt Dally's admiring and grateful gaze upon him, and he knew that she believed what he said; but he had never seen Mrs. Jacobs's smile so pitying. He lumbered out into the mild snowstorm. He dreaded to go home. He had a great temptation to take off his comforter, get cold in his throat, and thus, even at the sacrifice of his health, distract his wife's mind from the lecture she would give him.

But he went home. He was jovially whistling when he opened the back door. He found that Mrs. Winslow, with ostentatious virtue, was scrubbing the floor on her knees. She begged him not to come tracking in there. She said there was wood enough wantin' to be chopped to take him a fortnight. He went quickly and dutifully out to the woodshed and began to chop. He was there soon joined by Marietta, who came lurking round from a side door, with a square of red flannel pinned over her head.

"Oh, pa!" she cried in a suppressed voice. "ma's ben a carryin' on jest awful!"

"Don't talk 'bout your ma, child," said

Mr. Winslow, and then immediately inquired anxiously, "What she ben a doin' now?"

Marietta pulled the square of flannel yet closer about her head and almost whimpered:

"'Tain't so much what she's ben doin'; it's more the way she's ben lookin'."

Mr. Winslow chopped very hard. He knew well what were his wife's capabilities in the way of looks. He had had a good chance to learn in the last twenty-five years. He had often said to himself "he'd ruther she'd fly at him with a tomahawk than git one er them looks on."

"Your ma has her trials, I expect," he said with a desperate effort to be charitable.

"I sh'd like ter know what they be, then!" responded his daughter. "We're all 'fraid as death of her; 'n' there ain't a breath drawn in this house 'thout she's willin'. I d' know what her trials be."

Mr. Winslow said nothing. The father and daughter stood in silence, but they experienced great comfort in being there together. The woodhouse had been the scene of many consultations between the two, and of many regrets that "Ma was just as she was."

It was on the next Saturday that Marietta and her father were again standing among the piles of wood and the chips. It had been an awful week for them. Ma had kept on "her look" all the week, and she had persistently refused to eat anything but crusts at the table. She said crusts was good 'nough for a woman who wa'n't respected by her husband. Here her husband groaned. He remonstrated with her; he said "she'd do herself a damage goin' on in this way." She made no reply, other than to take another crust and try to eat it with her poor teeth. Marietta grinned heartlessly. She tried to comfort her father by telling him it was her belief that her ma, when alone in the "but'ry," made up for those crusts.

It was while they were in the woodhouse on the following Saturday that Mrs. Winslow's gray shawl and red cloud were seen moving rapidly across the brown, soggy pasture towards the Widder 'Bijah's house. Mrs. Winslow herself was inside the shawl and hood. As she expressed it, she "had ben growin' madder 'n' madder every minute all the week." She said she wa'n't the woman to be insulted by no man, not even her own

husband. She didn't care a cent 'bout the pup, 'twas the principle of the thing.

Thus it was in behalf of principle that she was striding towards that white house behind the poplars; and for the same reason that she suddenly flung open the door and walked in.

Dally was standing at the sink with a dark gingham "tire" enveloping her whole person. She was laboriously and despairingly scouring steel knives and forks with a piece of cork and some Bristol brick. It was like a sudden clap of thunder to her when she saw Mrs. Winslow, whom she now hated with a fury and fire not to be described. Mrs. Jacobs was "trying out fat" on the cook-stove, and held a long toasting-fork in her hand. With this fork she was turning over the lumps of suet.

"I s'pose you wa'n't expectin' of me," began the visitor, with an assumption of calmness which did not deceive anybody.

"No, I wa'n't," was the response.

"Wall, I came after that pup."

Mrs. Jacobs looked anxiously at Dally, who had stopped her work and was staring hard at the round, red face near the door.

"We ain't got no pup that don't b'long to us," answered Mrs. Jacobs.

"You've got one my husband brought over here a week ago to-day, at half-past ten in the morning," said Mrs. Winslow, with an air as if she were on a witness-stand and must be accurate.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jacobs, "we've got that one. That belongs to Dally. Mr. Winslow give it to her. She's got terribly 'tached to it already."

"Where is it?" asked Mrs. Winslow, looking all about the room.

As if in reply to her question a fat, smooth hound puppy came waddling through an open door and went and smelt of Mrs. Winslow's skirts. She bent down and took him in her arms.

"I guess I'll give him to Brother 'Lish's son," she said, and turned to leave.

Dally cried out. The child's heart was bursting. A sense of intolerable injury and grief was upon her. She caught up the big carving-knife she had been going to scour. She flung it at Mrs. Winslow. It stuck in the door close to her. A half of a Bristol brick followed, and this went with a thud

right on to the "bob" of hair which was concealed by Mrs. Winslow's red cloud.

Dally herself charged after the brick with a fervor and impetuosity only to be likened to the onset of a wildcat. The undisciplined mountain blood nerved her, and the strong mountain muscles seconded her. It was in vain that Mrs. Jacobs tried to interfere. The girl was all over her enemy, scratching, clawing, striking all at once. She did not make a sound. At first Mrs. Winslow kept shrieking out that she would send for the selectmen. But in a moment she found she needed all her breath to help in her defence. Of course she had to drop the puppy after the fight had continued for a very short time.

Dally gave one more blow, then left her enemy and darted for her treasure. She sat down on the floor with the dog in her arms and hid her face upon him, shaking piteously and moaning to herself.

Mrs. Winslow's cloud was in shreds and her face bleeding from Dally's nails.

Mrs. Jacobs opened a closet near, took out a bottle and suggested that she be allowed to put some "arnicy onto them hurts."

But Mrs. Winslow was in no mood for ar-

nica. She said 'twas the law she wanted, 'n' 'twas the law she'd have.

She was sopping up the blood with her apron as she spoke. Mrs. Jacobs put back the vial. She turned towards the bloody-faced woman and said she was mighty sorry this had happened, but she must say that if Mis' Winslow wanted the law she might have it 'n' welcome; but she couldn't have Dally's puppy, for it had ben give to her and was hern. Nobody had no more right to come 'n' take that dorg 'n' they had to break into er house 'n' take silver spoons. 'N' if Mis' Winslow wanted the law, 'n' the case was known, she guessed Mis' Winslow 'd git all the law she hankered for.

It may be possible that the speaker did not fully understand the status of the dog in the laws of the land, but her remarks were full of common-sense, and they produced a great effect upon the person to whom they were addressed.

Mrs. Winslow huddled her shawl over her head and went back over the pasture towards her home.

It was on her return that she burst into the wood-house where her husband and Mari-

etta were. They were horrified, of course. She told Mr. Winslow that he upheld folks in their tryin' to murder his wife. She said that that Caroliny gal had come within an inch of killing her, 'n' she s'posed he'd be glad of it. She did not mention the puppy. At last Marietta asked humbly "if her mother 'd seen that pup."

"Yes, I seen it."

"Did you try to take it away from Dally?"

"'Tain't no matter whether I did or not."

"Oh!" said Marietta, now thoroughly enlightened.

Contrary to expectation in the Winslow family, the wife and mother suddenly put away "that look," became amiable for a long time and never mentioned the puppy again.

"That thar Dally done her good," said Mr. Winslow, with a shrewd look at his daughter, in one of their confidential talks.

IV

DALLY TAKES THE PLEDGE

"SOMETIMES it does seem as if 'twas more than I can do to stan' it."

Mrs. Abijah Jacobs was mounted in a chair before the open door of her "chiny closet." She was groping with her hand in the darkness of the upper shelf, seeking to find the row of bottles which held her supply of spirituous liquors "for sickness." She had three bottles, each holding a pint. One held whiskey, one brandy, and one cherry rum, the latter made every year from the best Jamaica rum and wild cherries from the tree that grew in the lane.

"That's what we all say, Mis' Jacobs," responded the neighbor. She was waiting with a thin blue teacup in which to carry home some cherry-rum for her daughter, who was supposed to have been too free in her use of cucumbers which had been

sliced and allowed to become flabby. As the mother said, in her impatience, that she "didn't know but 'twas good 'nough for D'rindy to have a touch of cholery mobbus, if she was a mind ter chaw down them withered cowcumbers. Jest as they were trying to can huckleberries, too!"

The widow Jacobs did not reply to the remark, and the woman repeated, "That's what we all say."

Now Mrs. Jacobs turned round so suddenly on her chair that she had to catch at a shelf to keep herself from falling.

"What do you all say?" she asked, sharply.

D'rindy's mother cowered somewhat, but she replied bravely:

"That we don't see how you do stan' it with that gal you took. Mis' Winslow was tellin' only yisterday that she was expectin' to live to see the day when you'd send Dally to the poorhouse."

"She won't, then; not if she lasts 's long 's Methusaleh did," said the widder 'Bijah, growing very red in the face as she spoke. "Not but what she is a trial, and I do git out of patience with her," she added, more

mildly. "But I d' know what we can expect of a critter brought up on White Crow Mounting, down in Caroliny. She ain't had the privileges that Mis' Winslow's sut under all her life. We can't all be Mis' Winslows, you know."

The withering sarcasm of the last remark almost made the woman with the blue tea-cup tremble as she heard it.

Mrs. Jacobs laboriously dismounted from the chair, changed its position a little, then laboriously mounted it again, and this time she put her hand on the row of pint bottles, which it seemed to her had been put in the wrong corner.

"Here they be," she said. "I'll give ye a stiff dose of the cherry, Mis' Willey, so as to bring D'rindy right out of it."

When the liquid was poured out it seemed to both women to be very pale.

"I d' know why it should look so," said the widow. "Jest sup at it 'n' see how it tastes."

Mrs. Willey "supped" at it, and hesitated to speak. Finally she said it was "ruther flat, somehow; but mebby 'twas her notion."

Mrs. Jacobs put the cup to her lips and withdrew it suddenly.

"'Tain't your notion," she said, crisply; "it's flat as rags. I declare!"

She took the bottle of whiskey and of brandy and held each to the light. It did not seem to either of the women that they were of the proper color.

Mrs. Willey was beginning to enjoy the situation. But she drew a long face and said:

"And your liquors are always so good! Strange, ain't it? You don't noways think, do you, now, that—"

She did not finish her sentence, for in the open doorway, leading from the woodshed, appeared the figure of Dally.

The child had her stockings and shoes in her hand, while her feet and quite an extent of slim leg were caked with half-dry, black meadow mud. Her straw "shaker bonnet" hung by its strings on her back. Her light hair was curling with perspiration, and her face had a good deal of meadow mud "smooched" on it. One arm held closely pressed to her a large quantity of sweet flag-

root, its long green leaves hanging down and dripping. Close to her bare feet was the hound puppy which Mr. Winslow had given her, and which Mrs. Winslow had tried to take away. He also was dripping with muddy water.

Dally had opened her lips to speak, and her whole aspect was one of happy eagerness, when her eyes caught sight of the three bottles, which were standing in a row on the table.

She shrank as suddenly and markedly as a sensitive plant shrinks before rude hands.

"Dally," said Mrs. Jacobs, "come here."

There was an instant's hesitation before the girl replied, without stirring from her position:

"I 'low I ain't gwine ter move, nor ter tell you uns nary word till that ole 'oman goes."

She sat down in a dingy heap on the scrubbed floor. She let the flag-root fall that she might the better hug the puppy, which immediately crept into her lap with a small, babyish whine. The girl's face seemed to harden behind its mask of mud.

The Widder 'Bijah felt her heart sink at the same time that an overwhelming and

yearning love filled it. This love, awakened by Dally, made Mrs. Jacobs seem strange to herself. She had a nebulous kind of consciousness that it was taking the edges off her character in some way. And, in spite of all her common-sense—and no woman ever had more of that article—the affection she gave the poor waif from the Carolina mountains appeared to her to be the same emotion that had been gathering all these years for the daughter who had never been born. Altogether, Dally had awakened in this elderly Yankee woman a glow and a sense of new vividness in life which confused while it exhilarated. She told herself nearly every day that "she s'posed she should git her bearin's 'fore long."

It was March when Dally had been seen at the Jacobs gate in the too large plaid cloak, and with the rain in drops on her beautiful hair and eyelashes, bearing that letter from Mrs. Lander. And now it was July, and the widow had not got her "bearin's" yet, and seemed as far from that state as ever.

When Mrs. Willey heard the child's reply she grasped the blue teacup tightly in the

hardened fingers of her right hand. She smiled, and she tossed her head. Was she going to be called an old woman by that little viper from down South?

She marched to the door. There she paused long enough to say "she guessed Mis' Winslow 'd ben right when she said there shouldn't no child of hern be seen with that gal Mis' Jacobs had took."

Then she walked away, followed by an indescribable gaze from Dally's wide eyes.

If there was anything in life to which the widow of Abijah Jacobs had been accustomed it was to being equal to emergencies. She had known exactly what to do when her husband's hired man had cut his leg so horribly with his scythe. Everybody had said that if she hadn't done just what she did, the man would have bled to death before the doctor came. In preserving time, when jelly wouldn't jell, she knew how to bring it to terms, and no jelly had ever been known to hold out long in rebellion beneath her hands. After 'Bijah had died she not only knew how to manage the property, but she knew how to refuse the men who came in the hope of consoling her and of sharing that

property. There was not any one in Ransom so "facultied" and so capable.

But here she was sitting beside the table which held the three bottles, feeling so weak and wretched that she could have covered her face with her hands and wept. She knew that Mrs. Willey would go through the neighborhood, telling how Dally had drunk all that liquor. "Liquor" is what all kinds of fluid material containing alcohol is called in Ransom.

Worse still, Dally had probably really drunk the whiskey, and the brandy, and the rum, and then filled the bottles with water. And now it was possible she would lie about it.

Mrs. Jacobs looked at the girl. She thought wildly of sending for the minister. She wondered if she had failed in not taking Dally to more evening prayer-meetings. But the girl had slept so heavily through them that it seemed cruel not to let her go to bed instead of taking her out.

Mrs. Jacobs had been leaning her head on her hand and shading her eyes while she thought painfully. After a few moments she looked up to speak to Dally, but she was

not there. The puppy, however, was having a nap on sweet flag leaves. As Mrs. Jacobs walked to the door the girl came in with a bound, looking so fierce that the other asked quickly where she had been.

"I war gwine ter shy er rock at thur dad-burned ole heifer, I war," she answered, breathlessly.

"You don't mean at Mis' Willey?" was the horrified question, as Mrs. Jacobs started forward to see what damage had been done, remembering Dally's onslaught on Mrs. Winslow.

"Yes, ma'am, at she," Dally said.

Then she caught her friend's arm and continued: "But I didn't do hit—no, ma'am; I didn't do hit. But it wasn't 'cause I didn't long ter see er rock bangin' on ter her cussed ole head!"

Dally was trembling with excitement, and was absolutely white. She held on tightly to Mrs. Jacobs's arm, and gazed eagerly in her eyes.

Even in the midst of her anger and fury there was in the attitude something of appeal.

"No," repeated Dally in a shrill voice, "I didn't do hit, only jes' 'cause I thought of

you, somehow, 'n' held my hand ; 'n' the rock wouldn't go. Thar 'tis."

She pointed just beside the doorstep, where a ragged stone of the size of her fist lay, apparently just dropped.

"If she'd er said nothin' 'ginst yo', 's well 's 'ginst me, I'd er let the rock rip!"

"Dally."

The girl stood quivering. Mrs. Jacobs led her into the room, and the small hound puppy followed dejectedly at her heels, and sat down on his haunches close to those heels, when they paused near the table, where the bottles stood.

"I s'pose you drunk them, Dally," said Mrs. Jacobs, pointing to the bottles.

Dolly quivered again. She seemed to undergo some kind of an inward convulsion. Then she said :

"Yes, ma'am."

"When?"

"At odd times when yo' war summers else."

"Oh, how could you?"

"Jest as easy — I liked 'em all. Thur whiskey war the best. I've allers had whiskey. Ole Tid had her bottle, she did, an' Barker an' me we jest cotched er sup when-

ever we could. Most times hit war two or three times er day. I like hit."

Mrs. Jacobs sat down. Her way seemed dark before her. With a despairing movement she drew the girl towards her and leaned her head on the young shoulder. She was asking herself why she was so depraved as to love this creature who owned she was used to drinking whiskey, and liked it. But she had owned it. There was a glimmer of light. She had owned it.

Dally tried to stand quite still, but she vibrated beneath the touch of the head on her shoulder.

After a moment Mrs. Jacobs felt an arm which was very aromatic with sweet flag put gently round her neck.

"You've ben real good for several weeks, Dally," said the woman.

Dally choked. She essayed to speak twice before she was able to say:

"But I war er drinkin' that stuff all thur time;" in a moment she added with some unction, "Thur whiskey war thur best."

Mrs. Jacobs drew Dally and all her mud into her lap, and the puppy climbed into Dally's lap.

"And me the greatest temp'rance woman in the town!" exclaimed the widow. "Why, child, I b'long to all the societies, 'n' yet I can't keep you from drinkin' liquor."

Mrs. Jacobs thought of how she was a member of the W. C. T. U. of the country at large, as it were. And had she not been a member, since the hour of its birth, of the "Sparkling and Bright Battalion," a company formed in the village for the special purpose of seeing to it that the young should not become wine-bibbers? Had she not attended their meetings just to encourage them? And was she not scrupulous in keeping all her dues paid? She was also, since years ago, a Son of Temperance, as much as a woman could be. She could pay her money, and it was just as good as if she had been a man. She knew they did not care whether she met with "the Division" or not, as long as they had her money. And she always made it a duty to entertain more than her share of temperance "delegates," when delegates were to be entertained.

It would have been bad enough if she had taken a boy who drank; but a girl!

The aromatic arm had been tightening

round her neck. The puppy reached up its cold nose to her face.

"You feel awful, don't you?" whispered Dally.

She had grown to have moments of not using her Southern dialect when she spoke; and sometimes she mixed the Yankee speech with it in a way strange to hear.

Before Mrs. Jacobs could reply, the girl went on:

"It wa'n't nothin' ter drink whiskey onter White Crow Mounting; it wa'n't. We uns all did hit, ef we gurt er chance. Pore whiskey it war, too. I never supped no sech as yourn."

"Dally," cried the widow, suddenly, "do you love me? Do you think I've ben good to you?"

A beautiful light came into the girl's eyes. Her whole face softened, and now looked touchingly young.

"Do I lurv yo'?" she repeated. "Oh, I lurv yo' as no tongue can't never, never tell!"

Her breath caught, and she struggled with it a minute before she went on. Mrs. Jacobs was looking into the lovely deeps of her eyes.

"An' you've ben heavenly kind ter me."

The woman held the child close before she said, solemnly:

"I want you to give me a sacred promise, Dally."

"I will; I will," said she, brokenly.

"But you must keep your word if you give it. You know a promise must never be broken."

Dally nodded.

"Promise that you will never taste a drop of liquor of any kind, unless it is given you for sickness."

The girl stood up with a white face and intent eyes and gave the promise.

Mrs. Jacobs took the soiled hands.

"And don't steal anything, Dally. It is dreadful for me to think you could steal; and how sly you were!"

It was impossible to doubt the penitence in the untutored heart.

When Dally went to bed that night she told "aunty," as she called Mrs. Jacobs, that if Barker could "come urp north" and live with them, he would probably grow so good that by the time he was a man he could be a minister and "give preachin's."

But still the widow shrank from the thought of Barker.

The next week the Rev. Mr. Alden, the present incumbent of the Ransom pulpit, called on the Widder Bijah. He said that Sister Winslow had impressed it upon him as his duty to call and ask Sister Jacobs if she had dealt with the girl she had taken from the South. Sister Winslow was convinced that the girl should be dealt with.

The widow replied that if she had not dealt with Dally she was sure of one thing, and that was that there wouldn't nobody else deal with her.

The minister did not feel exhilarated when he walked away. He was very young and may learn not to follow the advice of Sister Winslow.

V

DALLY AND MARIETTA HAVE A GOOD TIME

MR. PETER WINSLOW was the kind of man who, in winter, wore a long blue wool "frock" and a gray comforter twisted about his neck.

But in August he could hardly endure that kind of a costume, so he went to the other extreme and wore blue overalls, much faded from frequent washings performed by his wife, and held upon his portly form by one strap of the same material, going up from the left front over his shoulder to the right back. His voluminous white shirt was held down so loosely round the waist by this arrangement in regard to his pantaloons that if there was the least wind going his shirt was filled with it, and presented the appearance of a balloon ready to start on an aerial voyage.

His wife, who was usually described as "she that was a Jones," as if those words

completely portrayed her, ruled her family, including her husband, with a rod of iron, but she always acknowledged that she had no influence with him in regard to his clothes. She used to declare that she did not believe that the angel Gabriel, if he should come down on purpose to make Peter Winslow wear something decent in summer, would have the slightest influence with Mr. Winslow. This remark was often repeated, and was supposed to convey the idea, in background, as it were, that Mrs. Winslow was as powerless in other matters as she was in regard to the gentleman's habiliments.

Her daughter Marietta, who was her father's intimate "crony," used to get, as she said, "awful sick of hearin' about the angel Gabriel."

Mr. Winslow had just driven out of the yard in his hay rigging. He was going to the far meadow. He was standing with his feet, in huge rubber boots, very wide apart and braced so that he could keep his balance as he turned into the road. His faded overalls were secured, as I have said, and his shirt was rounded out in the back with the

breeze to a particularly large circumference; and Mr. Winslow was a large man even without this arrangement.

"There goes yer father," said Mrs. Winslow spitefully to Marietta, who was scouring a milk-pan, and purposely not putting any strength into her hand as she did so. "There he goes again, lookin' like sin 'n' Satan, with his shirt like that. I feel ashamed ter have the neighbors see him. Why don't he wear a jumper?"

Marietta dipped her flannel rag into the soft soap and then into the beach sand, and, like a wise child, remained silent. Her father was often taking her out to the barn or wood-house and cautioning her to hold her tongue.

"Nothin' 'll take the wind outer yer mother's sails so quick as for us to keep still," he would say.

Therefore Marietta now kept still. She shut her little mouth very tight, and was saying to herself:

"If she goes 'n' brings up Gabriel now, I'm afraid I sh'll have to speak."

Mrs. Winslow would have been shocked if she had thought that she was the means

of causing her daughter to think disrespectfully of any of the heavenly host, but this constant reference had well-nigh removed any emotion of awe there might ever have been in the child's heart in regard to angels.

The woman poured the last of the cream into the churn and slapped the dasher down viciously in it.

"It's comin'," thought Marietta, lazily taking still more soap. "Oh, I wish I could go down in the medder with par, instid of staying here!"

"I do b'lieve, 'n' I shouldn't be 'fraid to say it anywheres," said Mrs. Winslow, in her most irritating staccato, "that if the angel Gabriel should tell your father ter wear a jumper ruther than his shirt in that way, he wouldn't do it. Your father, Marietta, is jest as sut—"

The girl dropped her rag into the bowl of sand and turned her flushed, freckled face towards the speaker.

"I do declare, mar," she cried, "that that old Gabriel better stay up in Heaven and mind his business, ruther than be comin' down here medlin' with par's trous'rs. Par's

trous'rs are all right. You've been an' got me so's I jest about hate Gabriel; an' I always uster think he was first-class all round. I—"

Marietta did not know what she should have said, and was at that pitch that she did not care. Mrs. Winslow seized her by the shoulder and shook her violently.

"You go straight inter the bedroom," she said. "If I've got a child that'll speak disrespectful of the angel Gabriel, I d' know what we're comin' to. It's all yer father's fault. Don't you come outer that bedroom till I call ye."

The door was shut and locked, leaving Marietta in a very small room which led from the kitchen. The blind was closed; the sun was beating hotly on it, and sending through the mosquito-netting that was stretched across the window-frame a combination of odors of herbs and flowers that grew outside. The perfume of warm sage leaves was the most striking, and it penetrated to Marietta's disturbed senses and made her think of Thanksgiving turkey and of the times when her mother "fixed sausage meat."

But it was no time to think of any kind of thanksgiving.

She threw herself angrily upon the patchwork spread on the bed and did not care how much she "squashed" the high-piled feathers. She was reckless. She told herself that some girls had mothers that were different. She wished she was old enough to marry, not that she might have a husband, but that she might have a home of her own and ask her father to come and live with her. She reviewed the boys of her acquaintance, wondering which one would do the best as a provider of a home for her father.

Her thoughts soon became indistinct, and her hot, indignant eyes closed.

It seemed to her that she immediately began to dream that the blind was open, a bar of sunlight on her face, and some one whispering her name.

Finally she sat up and blinked her eyes in the sunshine. The blind was open, and presently she was able to see a face looking in at her.

"Git urp," said an eager whisper; "come out hyar."

With fear and trembling Marietta crept to the window.

Dally's chin was resting on the window-ledge, and Dally's vivid face was looking at her and seeming to palpitate as it looked. The expression most visible on it just now was that of joy at seeing her friend.

"If mother should ketch you!" exclaimed Marietta in a whisper.

Dally laughed noiselessly.

"I ain't feared," she whispered back. "Come! I've gurt er pony, an' I war bound yo' should have one er thur fust rides."

Marietta clasped her hands, which were still soiled with soap and sand and the black from the pans.

"I can't believe it!" she whispered again, but glanced over her shoulder at the door that led into the kitchen. She repeated in more terrified tones: "Oh, if mother should ketch us! I jest 's live die 's have her open that door now!"

"She won't, I tell yo'," replied Dally, with an air of security that greatly impressed Marietta, who asked: "How do you know?" with something like admiration.

Instead of replying, Dally put her hand up and gently removed the frame of netting from the window.

She looked at Marietta with such an inviting glance that that little girl did not linger any longer in indecision, but put one leg, with a calico "pantalette" on it, over the window-sill; and as this leg was directly followed by its mate, she was presently standing on the ground close to the sage-bed. Mrs. Winslow had worn pantalettes when she was a child, and she argued that what was good enough for her was good enough for her daughter, though, as Marietta rebelliously declared, "nobody else wore such things."

Dally threw an impulsive arm round Marietta's neck and kissed her.

"It's turrible long sence I seen yo'," she said softly, her eyes gleaming.

"I know it," returned the other; "but ye know mother won't let me. She says no child of hern—"

"I know 'bout that; yo' needn't tell me none er that," interrupted Dally with a swift anger. She raised a small and very dirty fist. "Ef she's er mind ter act that

away—" she began. But her companion would not let her finish the remark; she seized the fist and drew Dally rapidly along by the currant bushes and the great rhubarb plants which flapped against their bare ankles until they came to the garden wall. The other side of that wall there was a clump of milkweeds, from whose curious bloom-clusters the sun was drawing out a full torrid fragrance.

As the two girls climbed over the loosely placed stones, Marietta asked breathlessly:

"Is it a truly pony?" When they stood on the other side, Dally pulled the other along, as she answered:

"I hope as yo' ain't gwine ter be disappointed. 'Tain't so much of er pony as 'tis er hoss. Yo' didn't expect er teenty-tonty thing, did yo'?"

"I didn't expect nothin'," replied Marietta, looking eagerly in every direction.

"No more yo' didn't," was the response. "An' 'tain't so much er hoss nor er pony as 'tis—"

Here Dally clapped her hands on her own mouth and gazed shiningly over them at Marietta, who was becoming more and more

bewildered. The latter began to run, but allowed herself to be guided by her companion. She announced pantingly that she wouldn't say another word till she was where she couldn't hear her mother if she should holler.

"She mout holler," returned Dally, "but she can't ketch yo'."

At this very significant remark, Marietta stopped short. What had Dally done? Marietta had a warm love for Dally, but at this moment she told herself that she was "outlandish," and really one could not tell what an outlandish person might be led to do. In this case she had acknowledged that she had placed Mrs. Winslow in a position where, though she might "holler," she could "ketch" no one. Marietta was almost frightened.

"What you done?" she asked sharply. "Mar'll see that ye git your come-uppance if you done nothin' to her."

For reply, Dally only laughed. She laughed with such intense merriment, and the sound was so sweet and infectious, that Marietta was obliged to join her in spite of her doubts.

This child from Carolina possessed a mysterious charm for the Massachusetts child. The leaven of wickedness, the hitherto unknown flavor of love and caressing, the wild grace of manner, the suspicion of something savage and dreadful, all drew Marietta. Possibly, also, the fact that her mother disapproved lent zest to any interview she happened to steal. And the contrary fact, that her father did not disapprove, took from the girl any overwhelming sense of sin.

When the two reached the highway, Marietta felt that her curiosity was getting the better of her.

"I don't see no pony," she said.

"I called it er pony," said Dally, hesitatingly.

"Ain't it?" asked Marietta, her freckled face growing red at the thought of being deceived.

"It goes jest like er wild-cat," remarked Dally. "Yo' jest look hyar."

She pulled from behind a clump of sumach what seemed to Marietta's confused sense something very strange—two wheels hitched together, one very small and one very large.

"Looker hyar!" cried the other again, in an excited voice.

Dally sprang on top of those two wheels. She sat astride, and she made her legs go so fast, and the big wheel and the little wheel went so fast, that Marietta fairly shrieked with excited admiration. She clapped her hands, she danced up and down. Once, over in Farnham, she had caught sight of such a thing, but it was only a glimpse, and there was a man on it. She had supposed, of course, that only a man or boy could get on it. It was just like Dally to do that. Dally could do anything strange and bewitching. It was the most bewitching thing in the world to be on such a machine, and "to go it" like that. She screamed again as Dally turned and came towards her. "Le'me! le'me!" she shouted.

After a great deal of trying to balance against the fence, Marietta succeeded in scrambling on and holding on somehow behind Dally, like a monkey behind a rider.

They were both light in weight, and Dally had learned to ride in a curious, helter-skelter way. She explained that Mrs.

Jacobs's nephew, who lived off somewhere, had now gone somewhere else to be away a great while, and he had sent this thing to his aunt to be stored. Marietta ventured to suggest that "mebby they should hurt it," but Dally asserted so positively that it couldn't be hurt that she believed her.

It was not until the sun had gone behind some pine-trees over towards the west that Marietta's conscience, or her fear, suddenly awakened.

"Oh," she cried, "jest s'pos'n' if mar has opened that bedroom door!"

The two girls stood breathing hard, leaning against the fence, worn out with pleasure. It had even been vouchsafed to Marietta to go six yards alone on the bicycle before she and it fell over.

"She ain't done hit," remarked Dally, with calm assurance.

"I'll bet she has," said Marietta.

"She ain't. But she mout have hollered."

Marietta began to be frightened again. She looked fearfully at the sweaty, grimy face of her companion.

"I 'd know what ye mean," she said, just above her breath.

Dally returned the glance solemnly.

"Yo' go straight home now," she advised, "an' go inter that bedroom, 'thout no noise, an' don't yo' come outen thar twel yo' mar opens thur do'. Jest stay, ef yo' do hear no hollerin'. You're locked in, and yo' can't git out."

Dally delicately mounted the bicycle, but Marietta pulled her down.

"What ye mean?" she asked; "you've got ter tell me."

"When I see yo' ergin." With this reply Dally treadled rapidly away towards the Widder Jacobs's house.

VI

MRS. PETER WINSLOW SUSPECTS

THERE is a great deal of flatness in the feeling one has when creeping home after having run away. It was this emotion which Marietta experienced when she climbed the wall where the milkweed was, on her return to imprisonment, after her afternoon with Dally and the bicycle.

With each movement that she made she expected to hear her mother, or, worse still, to feel a sharp grip on her shoulder. But all was quiet and peaceful about the farm-house, save the heart of the little girl who was slowly coming round it. To her the very burdocks up under the wall seemed to reprove her.

"'Tain't no fun to come home like this," she whispered; then she added, "but I did have a good time."

It was getting almost more than dusk.

She wondered if her father had come back. She was thankful that she heard nothing of her mother, but she was frightened at the strange stillness. What had Dally done? Dally seemed to be capable of doing a great variety of things. And Dally had every reason not to love Mrs. Winslow.

Marietta entered the bedroom by the window, as she had left it. She felt as if she had been gone a week, and was surprised that nothing in the room had changed. She softly tried the door, and found it still locked.

How very still the house was! There was a whippoorwill on the grindstone, and he kept giving forth his call, late in the season as it was. Marietta sat down on the bed and put her fingers in her ears, so that she might not hear the bird. She kept them in for the space of about a quarter of a minute, and then was surprised that the bird was still singing.

There was the sound of cart-wheels coming down the hill. She knew the trot of the horses, and now she heard her father's cheery chirrup to his steeds.

She was so glad to hear it that she began to cry a little. Was supper ready?

When would things be natural again?

She waited breathlessly for the time to come when she should hear her father at the kitchen door. She knew precisely how long it would take him to put the horses in their stalls. He would have to milk by lantern-light to-night, and her mother would scold about that. But where was her mother? Dally had said she "mout holler," but she had not done so.

At last, in desperation, Marietta resolved that she would slowly count a hundred, and if nothing had happened by the time she had finished she would again jump out of the window and see what discoveries she could make. Just as she said "twenty-seven" her father's foot sounded in the wood-house, and at the same moment her mother's voice cried, in an imperative but subdued way:

"Peter Winslow! I say, Peter!"

The child heard her father exclaim to himself: "Sakes alive! What's up now?" then aloud: "Where be ye?"

The answer came in unmistakable tones: "I sh'd think you'd know 'nough to know where I be. Any other man 'd know quick 'nough, 'thout bein' told."

"Wall, you'll have ter tell me, for I can't make out," was the response, good-naturedly.

Now Marietta heard a great banging on a door. She thought she knew where it was. She felt as if she were made up entirely of astonished interest and surprise. And down at the very bottom of her heart was a wondering admiration for the individual who had done this. This was a greater deed than putting china dishes in "the branch," that they might wash themselves.

"I'm down suller!" cried Mrs. Winslow. "You're a pesky fool not ter know that. I've ben screamin' 'n' screamin' to Marietta, but she must sleep like the dead. But then, she's locked in."

Mr. Winslow's heavy, muffled tread went across the floor. Marietta was now entirely merged into the one act of listening.

"I sh'd say you was locked up yerself," he said; and Marietta knew he was turning the heavy oak button which was on the kitchen side of the cellar door, and which was the only fastening, and quite sufficient, too.

Now by the sound of her mother's voice the child knew she had emerged from her imprisonment.

"How in time—" began Mr. Winslow, but he was stopped short.

"Now, don't go to actin' 's if this was the greatest thing you ever heard of," cried the high, rasping voice. "And you needn't laugh. And if you go and tell anybody outside er this place, I'll—"

The voice paused, inadequate.

It was impossible for Mr. Winslow to help chuckling softly to himself. But he tried to become grave. He foresaw immediately that it would be a good thing for him to say occasionally to his wife: "When you got shet up in the suller, you know."

Now he inquired sympathetically "how it happened, and how long she'd ben there?"

She endeavored to be calm. She did not know where to wreak her anger. And she almost believed it was an accident.

"I've ben there quite a spell," she answered. "I only hope I sha'n't have the rheumatiz to pay for it. I jest went down with my butter. I s'pose when I shet the door behind me, the button turned right on to it. I've ben waitin' for you to come home. I got tired hollerin' to Marietta. Besides, I locked her into the bed-

room for bein' sassy. I guess she went to sleep."

Mrs. Winslow was quite mild. As she walked across the kitchen to the bedroom door she went so far as to express sorrow that supper wasn't ready, and thought they'd have to do with bread and milk this time.

Marietta, behind that bedroom door, was, to put it rather strongly, in a trance of gratitude that things were turning out this way.

She felt sure that Dally, waiting round outside the house for a chance to see her, had seen her mother go down to the cellar, and had promptly and silently walked in and turned that button. And she herself had gone off with Dally before Mrs. Winslow was ready to come up from the cellar.

Marietta thought of a Sunday-school story she had just read, where everything had worked together for good for two children because they did not do wrong. Here was a case that made her almost think that things were quite as likely to work together for good if you did do wrong. If anything ever seemed what folks called providential, this state of affairs seemed so.

The door was now flung open, and Mrs.

Winslow told her daughter to run and milk some of the cows for her father, while she "put a few victuals onter the table."

Father and daughter went silently out. They were silent until four of the cows were milked. Then, as they were going back to the barn, after having emptied their pails, Mr. Winslow swung his lantern forward a little, so that its rays fell on his companion's face.

"Marietta," he said, with solemnity, "that suller door button turns real hard."

"I know it does, father," she answered, with equal solemnity.

"Somebody turned it after she was down suller," he said. He usually called his wife "she."

Marietta did not feel that she could speak. She was going to tell her father everything, but she was not equal to doing so now.

Mr. Winslow went on in a meditative manner:

"It couldn't have ben you, Marietta. Was that button turned knowin' that she was down suller?"

Marietta set her milk-pail suddenly on the ground and seized her father's hand.

"Oh, par!" she whispered, "it all come on account of mar and the angel Gabriel. But don't arsk me no more now. I'll tell you to-morrer."

"Don't you fret, little girl," was the reply. And Marietta touched her cheek for an instant to Mr. Winslow's shirt sleeve before she relinquished his hand.

That evening after all had gone to bed in the Winslow house save its mistress, a woman was standing in the kitchen with a small kerosene lamp in her hand.

She had a short petticoat and sacque on, for she had paused in the act of undressing, being struck by a sudden suspicion.

She felt that she wished to be alone for a few moments, and alone in the kitchen. She held her lamp extended and was looking intently at the cellar door. Finally she advanced and put one hand on the button; she turned it back and forth meditatively. Mr. Winslow's remark to his daughter concerning that button was strictly correct. It did "turn real hard." The slamming of the door would not make it move a particle. But Mrs. Winslow tried that experiment several times to convince herself—and she

was convinced. Her heavy cheeks seemed to grow flabby under the conviction. Her small eyes, set in her head something like those of a pig, began to have a dull, red light in them. "She that was a Jones" was laboring under some excitement. She heard her husband snoring in the "north bedroom," and the sound exasperated her. She turned and almost shook her fist in that direction, while she made the following somewhat irrelevant remarks:

"There's Peter, he'd snore if I was being murdered in cold blood."

To be murdered in cold blood seemed a much more effectual and dreadful way of exit than any other, and it was worse for Peter to snore at such a time.

Mrs. Winslow advanced and turned that button again; she was fascinated by it.

"It never done itself, after all," she said aloud. After a somewhat long silence she uttered the sequel to the above remark in the following words: "Somebody done it."

She held the lamp close to the button and peered at it as if she were a detective and were about to find a small drop of blood.

The oak button remained silent and entirely secretive. One might almost have said that it taunted her.

Mrs. Winslow withdrew the lamp and set it on the table. She put her hands on her hips and asked:

"Who done it?"

The empty room made no reply. Mr. Winslow continued to snore.

Instead of becoming calm as the moments flew on, this lady felt more and more indignant. It certainly was not soothing to be obliged to spend so much time in one's cellar.

"Why didn't Marietta hear me holler?" suddenly asked Mrs. Winslow, still addressing space, and again space did not reply.

A score of questions were let loose in Mrs. Winslow's brain. She told herself that she shouldn't sleep a wink that night. She said aloud that "she'd find out who done it, and then—" here words failed her.

She disappeared within the bedroom; the light went out and in five minutes there were two snoring instead of one.

Marietta had been too nervous and ex-

cited to sleep as usual, and so it happened that she lay with wide open eyes and caught some words of her mother's soliloquy. After this soliloquy ceased the child continued to toss and turn in her room at the other end of the kitchen. At last, with the consoling thought in her mind that she "guessed par was enough for 'em," she also fell asleep.

Meanwhile at the Widder 'Bijah's, Dally had passed an exceedingly peaceful night. She was like one who has the consciousness of having done a good deed. She had been behaving, as Mrs. Jacobs said, "jest beautiful" since drinking the three bottles of liquor and taking the pledge thereafter. There was no more liquor in the house to tempt her, and, besides, the child felt strong in the strength of her promise and her love for Mrs. Jacobs.

They had eaten their dinner of pork and string-beans and huckleberry pie. They were still at the table, and the widow was drinking her third cup of tea. Dally sat opposite her, a pleasant light in her brown eyes and a pleasant curve on her lips. She was evidently thinking of something agreeable. The elder occasionally looked at the

young face and felt her heart warmed at the sight.

At last Dally laughed a little and exclaimed:

"I wonder if she's gurt out yet."

Mrs. Jacobs smiled in sympathy, and asked: "Who's got out?"

Dally stooped to take up her puppy, who was pulling at her skirt, before she answered, in her clear voice, which had so little of the past and so much of the future in it: "That triflin' ole Winslow 'oman."

Mrs. Jacobs placed her cup in its saucer with a clatter. She stopped smiling. What was she going to hear now?

"The Lord give me wisdom!" she said to herself. "Don't talk that way, Dally," she said, gravely. "You mean Mis' Winslow?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The child held her puppy up under her chin, where it was taking a nap.

"I didn't know she'd ben shet up."

"Oh, yes, ma'am. She war shet up quite er spell yisterday," was the cheerful reply.

"Where?"

"In her suller."

Mrs. Jacobs moved uneasily.

"Who shet her up?"

"Me, ma'am," with even greater cheerfulness. "Leastways I turned thur button, an' I 'low that did thur business."

VII

MR. PETER WINSLOW WARNS THE WIDOW

MRS. JACOBS abruptly rose from the dinner-table when she heard this admission from Dally that she had turned that "suller-door button," and thus made Mrs. Winslow a prisoner in her own house, or rather under her own house.

She walked to the window. She was alarmed and astonished that the first impulse of what she would have called her "natural heart" was an impulse of satisfaction that that "pesky woman" had been shut in her cellar. She wanted to turn to Dally and say it was good enough for her. She had a wicked satisfaction in thinking how Mrs. Winslow must have felt when she found she couldn't get out.

The widder 'Bijah drew herself from these thoughts with a sudden gasp of self-reproval. "And me a professor!" she exclaimed in a whisper. She looked furtively back at the

child at the table. Dally was placidly introducing pieces of pie-crust into the little hound's mouth. At this moment the girl glanced up and met that perplexed and sorrowful gaze, and her own expression changed instantly. She hugged the puppy to her suddenly and sprang to her feet.

"Master King!" she cried out, almost fiercely, "yo' ain't er lurvin' that ole 'oman, be yo'?"

"No," said the widow, "I don't love Mis' Winslow a grain."

"Then, I sh'd think yo'd be glad she war shut urp for a spell," said Dally, her face relaxing from its anxious look. "I war reckonin' yo' wouldn't keer. I've ben aimin' ter give she er dab of some kind, an' I done hit."

Here she began to laugh; then she remarked that her only regret was that she had not "ben round nigh 'nough ter hear thur critter holler."

During these remarks the woman who had undertaken to bring up this Carolina girl stood looking helplessly at her. She had a feeling that that "triflin' ole Winslow 'oman" would make this a kind of crisis. Something must be done. What should it be?

The whole affair seemed to Mrs. Jacobs to be a subject for prayerful consideration. She was one of those women to whom a consultation with God was at once practicable and needful. But she talked very little about such things. She did not know that Carlyle had said that the man who talks the most about good deeds does the fewest of them; nevertheless she agreed with Carlyle.

She told Dally to "pick up the dishes while she went up-stairs a few minutes."

The child put her dog on the best chair cushion and dutifully began to obey her.

Mrs. Jacobs went into the spare chamber and knelt down by one of the hard chairs which made part of the furniture of that room.

But she began no set form of prayer. She would merely have said that she was "jest a thinkin'." She leaned her elbows on the chair and covered her face with her hands.

The intensity of the feeling which possessed her recalled her younger years, those days when she "took things kind of hard," and suffered and enjoyed a great deal. But those days were a great ways off; they seemed to have been lived by some one

else. Since then there was a vast stretch of time, a kind of dead level along which she had trudged calmly. She had liked and respected 'Bijah, and they had almost always "seen alike," and were very comfortable together. She used to dream of love, but she had never felt for her husband that thing about which she had dreamed. Still, common-sense told her it was, as everybody had said, "a real suitable marriage."

As she leaned on her chair in her spare chamber this August day she knew she had never loved any creature in her life as she loved the child whom Mrs. Lander had sent from the Southern mountains. She had known this before, but it came over her now with greater and more overwhelming force. The strong, passionate cry of her heart was that Dally might be good and happy. Good she must be, even if she missed of happiness. But how to "bring her up?" What strange ideas she had! Even though she knew about "preachers" and "preachin's," and could sing hymns about "thur Lamb," and "thur cross on Calvary," what a heathen she was! If she were misunderstood and treated in the wrong way now, Mrs. Jacobs

felt that the child might go to some unspeakable bad. She shuddered as she thought of such a possibility. There was that in this Yankee woman's soul that made her comprehend the untutored sweetness and opulence, the indescribable charm of simplicity and richness, in the girl's nature. She comprehended in a way, but she stood at a loss before it. There was nothing commonplace about Dally. If she glanced at you, if she did but say "Howdy, ma'am," it was with a curl of eyelash, a tone of voice, that were different from anything ever known before in Ransom; and very different indeed from what is usual on "White Crow Mounting" and its vicinity. Ole Tid had not known it, nor Barker, nor any of those semi-human beings who dwell among those magnificent mountains.

But Mrs. Lander knew it the instant her somewhat languid but very appreciative eyes had fallen on the dirty, ragged creature who handed up her fallen glove to her as she sat on horseback by the bank of a rushing branch at the foot of White Crow. She took the girl, but she did not care anything about the brother, who was only a pasty,

stolid-looking poor white. After she had taken the girl she did not quite wish to burden herself with the actual care of her.

She remembered Mrs. Jacobs, with whom she sometimes spent a week or two in the summer. Just the place for the child. Mrs. Lander would contribute plenty of money when it was necessary, and she would like to see what that squalid creature with such eyes and such a fascinating suggestiveness would become after a few years in civilized life. Life was civilized in this New England village, but, of course, in this lady's eyes it was not precisely enlightened. Mrs. Lander thought of this waif often enough to send an occasional check, which Mrs. Jacobs scrupulously deposited in the bank for Dally's future use.

The kneeling woman tried to recall her wandering thoughts to the particular subject in hand now — the imprisonment of Mrs. Winslow. It would not do to pass that over. But the difficulties of the matter were great.

She had not closed the door behind her. It was open about a foot, and in this aperture there now appeared the figure of Dally.

She did not make the least noise. Under her left arm was the puppy, and his attitude showed that this position was a very familiar and acceptable one to him. He reached out his sleek head and snuffed a little, then turned and gave one soft lick on the cheek nearest him. He was the only one that seemed to consider that things were all right.

Dally looked depressed and bewildered. She hesitated. Finally she crossed the carpet softly, stood behind Mrs. Jacobs a moment, then stepped up and knelt down with great gentleness beside her, put one hand up over her own face, while she kept the dog in place with the other.

The widow stirred and sighed as she felt the little form pressed up against her. She was no nearer a decision than when she came up-stairs. She could not help a feeling of pleasure and relief, however, because Dally had come. The latter remained motionless in her position until Mrs. Jacobs put an arm around her, then she asked without taking her hand from her face:

"War yo' prayin', aunty?"

"I was tryin' to," was the answer.

"'Bout me?"

"Yes."

Silence, during which the two kept their positions, and the puppy slipped on to the floor and went to sleep.

Dally spoke again, but still with her head bent on her hand.

"Ole Tid useter 'low as prayin' war nigh onter bein' as no 'count as cussin', she did."

The arm about Dally involuntarily tightened, but Mrs. Jacobs did not reply. Presently Dally said, as if to herself: "But ole Tid war horrid, anyway." Then she made this remark:

"I reckon 'tis better ter pray nor 'tis to cuss."

"Don't talk about cussin'," said Mrs. Jacobs.

"No, ma'am."

A very long silence now came, during which the widow groped in vain for the right course to take. She was keenly aware of the dearness of the child within her arm, and she could not be keenly aware of anything else in any available manner. She felt that she was drifting into a very bad way. It almost seemed to her as if she were in danger of becoming shiftless. She recalled how very severe she had always been in her

judgment of mothers who did not sufficiently discipline their children. She had always said it was all nonsense to spare the rod. She had asserted that when you didn't know what to do with a child, then was the time to give it a taste of the birch. Her whole being shrank with horror from the thought of whipping Dally. Doubtless, though, she had often and cruelly been beaten.

Hardly knowing that she spoke, she exclaimed:

"I wish you hadn't shet up Mis' Winslow."

Now Dally raised her head from her hand, that she might look at her friend.

"I thought you didn't lurv her," she said.

"I don't."

"Then, why do you care?"

"Can't you understand that you mustn't do wrong to a person, even if you don't love 'em?" vehemently asked Mrs. Jacobs, almost beside herself as to the best course to pursue.

"She did wrong ter me. She wanted ter take my dog from me," said Dally.

"But we've got to see that we don't do wrong ourselves," was the helpless answer.

The girl did not speak. She was leaning

against Mrs. Jacobs and seemed to be thinking deeply. Apparently, as a result of that thinking, she announced at last that she "thought it done that ole 'oman good ter be shut urp in thur suller er spell. An' me an' Marietta had thur best kind of er time on thur sycamore."

Her face lighted as she said these last words. She always called the bicycle a sycamore, and could not seem to remember the correct name. She was patiently corrected for the twentieth time.

The sound of wheels was now heard in the yard, and presently a man's voice crying, "Whoa! stand still, can't ye?"

The two in the spare chamber rose hurriedly from their knees. Heavy boots were walking on the oilcloth of the kitchen, and somebody said:

"Where be ye all?"

"It's Mr. Winslow," said Mrs. Jacobs. She pushed the child gently back into the room and told her to stay there till she was called. Then she went slowly down-stairs and greeted her visitor rather solemnly.

The gentleman said "he guessed it wa'n't wuth while to se' down; he couldn't stop er

minute. He thought he'd run in, bein's he was goin' by."

Having said this, he stood near the door and seemed to wish he had not run in, even though he was going by.

Mrs. Jacobs asked him if he had had good luck with his medder hay. She inquired if his medders were all growin' up with young willers as hers were. He did not seem interested in "young willers," and his hostess asked him no more questions, but sat uneasily waiting, till Mr. Winslow abruptly burst forth with these words:

"I'm mighty afraid that when she does find out who done it she'll make a pretty bad fuss."

"Don't she know who done it?" anxiously questioned Mrs. Jacobs.

"Not yet. When I got home last night I found her locked in the suller. She couldn't git out till I let her out."

In spite of the best resolves in the world, a smile crept round Peter Winslow's mouth as he thus spoke. Mrs. Jacobs saw this smile, and he knew she saw it. She raised her apron and deliberately wiped her lips.

"I thought I'd tell ye, so ye might be

kinder prepared when it does come," went on the kind voice that Marietta Winslow found so comforting. "I'm reckonin' on its bein' kinder tough. You c'n be thinkin' what ye oughter do 'bout it. Marietta told me the whole story. Of course it was very wrong ter turn that suller-door button."

He shook his head with deep seriousness.

Mrs. Jacobs asserted that it was very wrong. Mr. Winslow turned towards the door.

"'Tain't necessary ter say I said nothin' on the subject," he remarked, with a great attempt at speaking in a casual manner. "It won't take her long ter find out. She's studyin' on it every minute. She won't rest till she's got to the root of it. P'raps you'll have to punish Dally. I guess I'll be goin'. You know 'tain't the first thing Dally's done to her. Save some of that sweet corn for seed, won't ye, Mis' Jacobs? I ain't seen none like it in town."

He pointed his whip at the patch of sweet corn near the house. Then he climbed into his cart; the horses started; the wind bulged out his shirt in the way so annoying to his wife and so worthy, in her opinion, of the interference of the angel Gabriel.

Up-stairs the hound puppy gave two or three very young-sounding barks. Then the household settled down into waiting until Mrs. Jacobs could decide what to do in view of Dally's misdeed, and until Mrs. Winslow should find out "who done it."

VIII

DALLY CONFESSES

A VEHICLE which was commonly mentioned as the "deepo' wagon" was coming along slowly on the road which leads from the Centre. It always moved slowly, no matter what the reason might be why one would think it should hasten. Mr. Dodson was never affected by any remonstrance of impatient passengers. He knew they must be taken in his wagon, or they must walk. So he used to expectorate over the right-hand front wheel with great enjoyment when any one fumed and fretted because the horse barely trotted down a hill, and walked on the level and up every ascent.

Sometimes, if a furious man, unused to the ways of the town, went so far as to swear, Mr. Dodson would look back at him over his slouching shoulder and tell him that "folks that wanted to go fast better stick to the steam-cars, and not come out to Ransom."

Then the man who had sworn would swear once more; this time that nothing should ever bring him to Ransom again. Whereupon silence would fall, and the horse would seem to go more moderately than before, and its driver would look perfectly satisfied as he leaned on his knees and placidly waved his whip over the back of his steed.

This morning the depot wagon was not conveying a man, but a woman, who sat on the back seat, and looked over the fields and hills as one looks who loves them, but who does not live among them.

Sometimes her glance would come back to Mr. Dodson, and would dwell amusedly upon him. She believed that, if she could come here a hundred years from now, she would find that same depot wagon, pulled by the same roan horse, who had "knock-knees," and whose ears flopped so very wide apart. And this horse would be driven by the same driver, who would distribute a great deal of tobacco-stained saliva along the highway. She had known Mr. Dodson ever since she could remember anything. He had looked precisely as he did now. He had always embraced every occasion on which to say that he "didn't

believe women oughter be a gittin' outer their places, 'n' meddlin' with public matters." He didn't think women were meant by the Almighty to know anything about "public matters." This last phrase was very popular with him; it seemed to mean a great deal, and to give him a vast amount of comfort every time he used it. If he had been made to define those words, he would probably have said that public matters were what women ought not to know. If anybody wanted more definition than that, that person must be very exacting.

Mr. Dodson invariably wore an old silk hat. As he was never seen with a new one, it was a subject of conjecture in the town as to where he found so many hats in exactly the same stage of dilapidation.

Mrs. Lander's eyes returned from a long gaze at the pine woods which crowned a hill by which they were driving. She looked at the silk hat before her, and she remembered a number of surmises concerning it which she had heard fifteen years ago at a sewing-circle at old Cap'n Jones's. She did not know why, but at the vivid remembrance of that sewing-circle, when she had been young, and had not

known anything beyond Ransom, her pulses suddenly stirred. She did not seem quite so indolent as she bent forward and inquired if there was any news in town.

Mr. Dodson meditated a moment; then he said that "the garden sass had all ben dried up. It hadn't ben no such dry time for thirteen years."

Mrs. Lander expressed her sorrow at this. She said she was always "fond of garden sass." She said "fond" because she knew that was the correct word to use here when speaking of a preference for a certain kind of food. One might be fond of one's lover; also of cucumbers and string-beans.

Mr. Dodson nodded his head. He had a sense of relief that his passenger did not seem stuck-up. He frequently told his intimate acquaintances that "nothin' in the world made him so mad as to see somebody that was stuck-up."

Presently Mrs. Lander inquired if the drying up of the garden sass had been all that had happened since last year.

"Mr. Alden has ben havin' kind of er revivil in his church," was the reply. "There's ben some awakenin' 'mong unbelievers. I'm

in hopes the revivil will extend to Mr. Starkey's charge."

Mr. Dodson was a Baptist, and his pastor's name was Starkey.

Mrs. Lander did not seem greatly interested in this news; but she made a little murmur of assent, and would have leaned back in her seat, only that no one could ever lean or do anything but sit bolt upright in the deepo' wagon.

Mr. Dodson shook the lines on the roan's back, and the roan walked even more deliberately. He coughed and spat, and then said that the "Widder 'Bijah was one of the pillars of Mr. Alden's church, 'n' he thought it would look well in her to draw the reins er little tighter onter that Caroliny gal she'd got there with her."

At these words Mrs. Lander's somewhat languid eyes took on a look of interest.

"How does the little girl behave?" she asked.

The driver threw up his head and opened his mouth very wide. He made no sound, and there was no mirth visible on his face. Still, from previous observation, Mrs. Lander knew that he was laughing. She waited until his hilarity should subside.

"She behaves like the old Harry," he said. "Wuss'n that, the widder's jest wrapped up in her. I'd know what's goin' ter become of the Widder 'Bijah 'long of that gal."

He paused a moment, looking down the road; then he added, "There they be now."

Mrs. Lander looked also. She saw Mrs. Jacobs's portly figure, crowned by a gingham sun-bonnet. She detected immediately that there was an air of importance and determination in the widow's walk.

Holding her hand was a slim form in a pale-blue gown, with a white straw hat on its head. This second figure moved with a spring and a lightness which made her companion's movements seem more heavy than usual.

The two gazed at the wagon, knowing that some one must have come from the "Farnham deepo'," for this was out of Mr. Dodson's regular route.

"I'll get out here," said Mrs. Lander. "Take my luggage to Mrs. Jacobs's."

"But she ain't to home," remonstrated Mr. Dodson.

The lady did not think it worth while to reply. She was used to being obeyed. She

put some money in the man's hand, and climbed down unaided to the ground. She went forward to meet the two, and Mr. Dodson, instead of going on, waited to watch the meeting.

"My goodness!" the widow had said, "if there ain't Mis' Lander!" and she had hastened forward.

Dally had not said anything. She had seen that graceful and indolent woman at the foot of "White Crow Mounting." It was she who had taken her away from Ole Tid and sent her here. In Dally's mind, Mrs. Lander had always been something more than a mere woman. Could a common human being have hands so soft and white and with such a caressing touch? Did those wonderfully fitting clothes grow on her, or what made them so different from anything she had ever seen before? There was no one in Ransom like her. She was almost as unlike people in Ransom as she was unlike those near Ole Tid's.

Mrs. Lander, whose lingering glance observed everything, observed that Mrs. Jacobs had the air of a person who is on her way to have a tooth pulled, and who is grate-

ful for an interruption. She also saw that Dally was pale, as if she were pale from determination.

Mrs. Lander shook hands with Mrs. Jacobs. Then she turned to Dally, and put a hand on each shoulder, looking down for a moment into the child's upturned eyes. After that gaze Dally felt herself enveloped in two warm arms; she inhaled a faint odor of violets; a gentle and yet penetrating kiss was pressed on her lips.

When she emerged from that embrace she was paler than before; but this time her pallor was from happiness.

She suddenly forgot the errand upon which she and Mrs. Jacobs were going.

But Mrs. Jacobs could not forget it. She began immediately to brace herself again.

"Now, Mis' Lander, you mustn't hender me," she said. "I'll give you the key, 'n' you go right in. We sh'll be there 'fore long."

Mrs. Lander saw Dally's face appear to become stiff with resolution again.

"Where are you going? To a dentist?" she inquired.

"I wish I was!" exclaimed the widow.

"I'd ruther have out every tooth I've got left in my head. We've got to go to Mis' Winslow's. Dally's ben naughty to her, 'n' she's promised me to confess 'n' ask her forgiveness. She knows I'd ruther do it myself, only I ain't the guilty one, so I can't."

Dally grasped the speaker's hand with both her own.

Mrs. Lander smiled. Both Mrs. Jacobs and her charge wondered how any one could smile at such a time; but the very fact that any one could do so was in itself cheering to Dally.

"What has Dally done?" was the next inquiry.

"She shet Mis' Winslow into her suller."

Mrs. Lander smiled again. She said that no doubt Mr. Winslow would be grateful if his wife could be shut in the cellar all the time.

"Now don't you go 'n' talk that way," remonstrated the widow, "jest when I've made Dally see she oughter confess. Mis' Winslow bein' what she is don't change the child's fault any."

"It gives some provocation, though."

Mrs. Lander proposed that she should go

with Dally to Mrs. Winslow's, and that Mrs. Jacobs should turn and go home.

Mrs. Jacobs wanted so much to accept the proposition that she felt it must be wrong. She insisted upon going, and Mrs. Lander insisted upon accompanying them.

Dally's spirit revived somewhat as they walked along. Nothing short of the great love she bore "aunty" could have sufficed to make her promise as she had done. In all her life there had never come to her anything so hard as this. She told herself over and over that she would rather die. It is astonishing how easy a matter death seems to early youth. Mrs. Jacobs saw how dreadful what she asked of Dally was, but, as she said, she "couldn't see her way no other how." It almost seemed as if she would be neglecting a corner-stone of the child's immortal education if she should let this pass, and she counted on making a move in the matter before Mrs. Winslow had made any discovery. And had not Peter Winslow warned her that his wife "wa'n't goin' to leave no stone unturned?"

The Winslow residence presented an entirely deserted appearance. But then, it al-

ways looked so. Every blind was shut towards the road. The blinds on the front door seemed to say that nothing less than a funeral could open them. The walk to that door was paved with smooth round beach stones, brown and white, arranged in alternate rows. No spear of grass ever dared to grow between those stones. The three walked over this way and round to the right, to a less elaborate gravel path. As they reached the back porch they came upon Mrs. Winslow putting clothes to soak in a large tub, and Marietta putting clothes to soak in a small tub.

When Marietta saw that Dally was with the two women, she first seemed much frightened; then she recovered sufficiently to hold up a pillow-case in such a way that it shielded her face while she opened her mouth and eyes to their fullest extent in warning pantomime to Dally. Dally saw this pantomime, and at any other time would have replied to it in kind, but now her mind was so filled with the dreadful duty before her that she only stared at Marietta and made no response.

Mrs. Winslow hurriedly wiped her hands on a table-cloth, which had not yet been placed in the tub. Mrs. Jacobs was secret-

ly glad that their hostess appeared somewhat "flustered" by the presence of the lady from New York.

"I declare," she said, "I wa'n't expectin' of ye, Mis' Lander."

"Naturally," was the reply, "you couldn't be expecting of me, Mrs. Winslow; I only decided at the latest moment last night to take the Fall River boat. It was even too late to telegraph to you, if one could get a telegram in Ransom, which fortunately one can't, not until a day or two after it is sent."

For some reason this reply, given very calmly and sweetly, seemed to confuse Mrs. Winslow still more. She put her hands in the soapy water, and was obliged to wipe them again. In consequence of thus forgetting herself, she looked at Marietta viciously, and told her sharply that "she ought to be whipped for not running without being told to see if the tea-kittle boiled."

Marietta rolled her sudsy hands in her apron, and departed for the kitchen. But at the door, which was behind her mother's back, this child found the opportunity to turn again to Dally and to indulge once more in the extreme opening of mouth and eyes.

This time, comforted by Mrs. Winslow's evident discomfiture, Dally smiled broadly, and was immediately asked by Marietta's mother what she found to laugh at. Dally promptly responded, "Nothin'," and Marietta disappeared.

As the two women continued to stand on the stoop, Mrs. Winslow was obliged to tell them to "come right in 'n' se' down."

Mrs. Lander thanked her effusively. The next moment all three were sitting in the semi-dark parlor, and Dally was standing by Mrs. Jacobs and looking at a "mourning-piece" hung on the wall opposite, in the only light place in the room. This piece was a representation of a section of some very ornate graveyard. A tall and much-carved marble monument, with a weeping angel on the top of it, was in the middle distance. In front was a group composed of a large man in evening dress, holding his hat in his hand; a tall lady, not in evening dress, but in a black gown completely swathed about with a crape veil; a youth in Eton jacket and hat, with his hand just raised as if to remove that hat; a small girl in more veil, and having in her arms a doll that had a face so very

cheerful that one might have wished it had not been brought into this cemetery. On an open space left for the purpose on the monument were the lines: "Sacred to the memory of—" Dally could not read any further; indeed, she found some difficulty in spelling that much out. All the people assembled in the picture, with the one exception of the doll, seemed to be reading the inscription with the utmost unction.

Thus gazing, Dally heard Mrs. Lander's melodious voice saying, with a great deal of sympathy:

"I am sorry to hear, Mrs. Winslow, that you have been shut up in your cellar. Did you suffer much inconvenience?"

A purple flush rose slowly to Mrs. Winslow's face. She forgot herself, and spoke violently:

"How'd that git out? Peter's ben blabbin', I s'pose. No, 'twa'n't nothin'. I didn't mind it none. 'Tain't worth speakin' about."

Dally had grown very rigid. She stood off a little from Mrs. Jacobs, but her small fingers clung convulsively to the widow's hand. She was perfectly white. She did not know how the dusky eyes of Mrs. Lan-

der were on her. All she knew besides the task before her was that the hand to which she clung held her firmly and encouragingly. She stood very straight, and looked intently at a large moth-patch on the left side of Mrs. Winslow's forehead.

"I turned thur button," she said, in a high voice. "I done it, an' I'm sorry, 'cause aunty's felt so 'bout it. I—" here she paused, and put one hand to her throat with a movement which made Mrs. Lander half rise from her seat as if to go to her.

With her hand at that slender white throat, the child's eyes turned pathetically to those of Mrs. Jacobs. Then Dally looked again at that moth-patch, and said, in a still higher voice:

"I arsk yo' ter fergive me, Mis' Winslow."

As the last word left her lips Dally flung herself like a tempest upon Mrs. Jacobs, who caught and held her fast.

IX

MRS. WINSLOW OFFERS A FEW PORTERS

A QUIVER of rage went over Mrs. Winslow's big body when she heard Dally's confession.

"I was sure on't!" she cried out, and it seemed as if she were going to reach forth a hand and clutch the child.

In an interval of absolute silence which followed there was heard a scratching at the door, accompanied by a whine. Then the door was opened by an invisible hand, supposed to belong to Marietta, and Dally's hound puppy came creeping deprecatingly in and crouched close to the feet of his mistress. It was a notable fact that all dogs, young or old, wore an air of deprecation when in the presence of Mrs. Winslow. They were apparently begging her to overlook the unfortunate fact that they were alive in the same world with her.

Mrs. Jacobs, with her arms about Dally,

was gazing at her hostess, and saying to herself that "that pesky woman was really worse than she had thought she was." It passed her comprehension that any human being could so receive an agonized confession from a little girl.

Mrs. Lander rose. Her cool, persistent gaze covered that disagreeable, perturbed face something as the muzzle of a revolver might have covered it. Mrs. Winslow began to writhe visibly. It had been a long time since Mrs. Lander had been so angry; and when this lady was angry somebody usually suffered.

The widder 'Bijah glanced at her and felt her spirits rise perceptibly.

"I guess she'll fix her," she thought, "'n' I don't care how much she fixes her. The more the better."

But Providence had arranged that the fixing of Mrs. Winslow, in this instance, should not be entirely effected by Mrs. Lander, although she began the process.

"Is there a revival meeting at Mr. Alden's church to-night?" inquired Mrs. Lander, with apparent irrelevance. Her voice was so clear, and her utterance so distinct, that

Mrs. Winslow somehow felt a great deal worse. She continued to writhe and to wish impotently that she had made believe forgive Dally immediately. The very fact that she could not guess what was going to be said next added to her unhappiness.

"I will go down to the prayer-meeting," said Mrs. Lander, with every appearance of a calm statement of intentions, "and I will make a prayer in which I will tell God, before the people, how cruelly unchristian you have been in not pardoning a poor child who has confessed her fault to you. And you just told me that your being in the cellar was nothing. I shall pray to God, before the people, to give you a better heart. I shall see that God and the people understand the case fully. And I shall do it this evening."

Before Mrs. Lander had finished speaking Dally had ceased sobbing, and her attitude, though her face was hidden, showed that she was listening intently. Here was some one who could do what she pleased. The girl almost gasped with the intensity of the emotions she had undergone, and with the admiration just added to them.

"Lowizy!" exclaimed the widow under her breath, in a mixture of horror and gratitude.

Mrs. Lander's name was Louisa, and sometimes in moments of excitement Mrs. Jacobs permitted herself to pronounce the name by which the lady had been called in early youth, when she had lived in Ransom, before she married the rich New York man.

Lowizy turned smilingly towards her friend.

"Surely, Mrs. Jacobs," she said, "you do not object to my praying for a wicked woman."

Mrs. Winslow, one of the prominent members of the Rev. Mr. Alden's flock, a fervent pleader with the Lord in times of revival, was huddled in her chair, a prey to more and stronger disagreeable feelings than she had known for a great many years.

It was very hard to face the conviction that Mrs. Lander would do just what she said; and that she would do it Mrs. Winslow was convinced.

But this woman was not endowed with eyes like a pig without having a pig's obstinacy. She held back from giving in words forgiveness to Dally. She sat silent and looked sullenly at the group before her.

Mrs. Lander was not going to wait. She put her hand on Dally's shoulder, which pressed against Mrs. Jacobs.

"Come," she said, "let us go." As they all turned towards the door, impetuous footsteps sounded in the kitchen, and immediately the figure of a tall boy appeared. Marietta was in the near background, and had the appearance of clinging to the boy's coat-tails.

Is it too much to hope that the reader may have remembered that these chronicles have mentioned that Bill Winslow meant to have given that puppy to Dally, but that it was Mr. Winslow who actually did so?

This youth had been visiting his grandfather over in "Snapit," a certain part of Ransom, during the vacation, and had thus been kept more out of sight than a masculine person of his height and years (seventeen and a half) ought to be.

He returned at this moment, almost as opportunely as if this had been a novel and he the hero of it.

Marietta must have given him a hasty and highly colored sketch of what was going on in the parlor, for she had not been many feet

away from the unlatched door all the time, and she now stood staring, oblivious that there was a great deal of suds on the front of her large "tire," which suds she would eventually have to answer for.

It is an obvious fact that this generation of young people is not remarkable for respect and veneration towards their elders. And perhaps she that was a Jones had no reason to expect either respect or veneration from her own son. Certainly she did not receive it, and this youth was the only person in the world who tyrannized over this woman. Since the time of his birth Bill Winslow had ruled his mother. If he did not always rule her with a rod of iron, it was from no wisdom on her part, but from some leaven of humanity in the boy.

He was a big fellow of his age; he had his father's face, with a hint of more refinement and individuality of courage in it. Peter had been cowed for too many years not to have lost something, both in appearance and character.

Bill stood a moment in the doorway, while his swift, glancing young eyes took in the scene. He snatched off his hat and flung

it behind him. He looked and seemed excited.

"What kind of a row is it you are having?" he asked, in his gruff, immature voice. "Mother, have you been acting like a fool? You act like a fool half the time. You'd better forgive Dally double quick. What more do you want than that she should confess and ask your forgiveness? Come, now; hurry up, mother!"

"I was shet up," whined Mrs. Winslow. "Oh, William, you don't know nothin' 'bout it."

"Yes I do, too—Met told me. Hurry up, I say."

Mrs. Lander looked at the boy and smiled upon him. It was a distinct pleasure to be even looked at by Mrs. Lander, if she were not angry; but if she gave you a smile in addition to the glance, the pleasure became a happiness.

Bill, receiving this favor from the lady, wondered yet more what his mother was made of that she could hold out thus.

But she had capitulated. "I forgive you, Dally," she said, in a reluctant tone.

"All right," said Bill. "Now come along,

Dally. How your dog has grown! It was the best of the lot, and that's why I wanted you to have it."

He lifted the spotted puppy in his arms and looked at Dally, who had withdrawn herself from Mrs. Jacobs, and who was gazing at Mrs. Winslow. Her young heart was swollen with a dreadful sense of injustice and a still more dreadful feeling of hate. She thought she should die with the tenseness of her emotion. She had scarcely heard the boy's words. He repeated them, and added that he had brought a gray squirrel from Snapit.

Mrs. Lander touched his arm.

"Don't talk to her," she whispered. "Do you not see she is as spent as if she had been fighting for her life? Do you think it was easy for her to ask pardon? It has almost killed her. I believe Mrs. Jacobs was wrong."

While she was speaking thus, the widow led Dally towards the door. As the girl passed the boy she held out her arms, saying:

"I want my dog." And Bill gave it silently to her. He followed her and said in a low voice, and with a good deal of feeling:

"Don't you worry, Dally. It was too bad.

I'll tend to mother. She sha'n't plague you."

Something in his manner now made Dally look up at him. He was startled by what he saw in her eyes. It helped to give him more of an idea of what she had suffered, at the same time that he was conscious of their wild beauty. He recalled, with a shiver of inexplicable pain, times when he had snared free creatures and they had looked at him in their suffering.

"Yo've ben real good ter me," said Dally.

She walked out of the house with Mrs. Jacobs and Mrs. Lander. William Winslow stood a moment gazing after them, his hands thrust far down in his pockets and his eyes much dilated. Then he turned into the house and gave his mother a very bad quarter of an hour.

Evidently this quarter of an hour was a needed discipline to Mrs. Winslow.

The next afternoon, while the widow and Mrs. Lander and Dally were sitting at leisure in the front room, an exclamation from Dally made the others look from the windows.

They saw the ample figure of Mrs. Winslow slowly approaching. The two women

looked at each other, while the girl fled away.

"I guess she's goin' ter overlook it," said the widder 'Bijah.

"I guess she is," said Mrs. Lander. "I must say," she went on, "that she has a fine son. It is wonderful."

"I s'pose he takes back somewheres," remarked Mrs. Jacobs. "There's a good deal more to him than there is to his father, 'n' Peter'd ben somethin' more with a dif'runt wife. I declare, I hate the sight of her; 'n' I d' know when Dally'll git over it."

By this time Mrs. Winslow had reached the step. She came in with tolerable self-possession. She had a basket of apples on one arm.

"I tho't I'd run over," she said, after the greetings had passed. "I knew you hadn't no porters this season, 'n' mine are uncommon fine. There ain't nothin' like um for slumps. We eat a good many slumps to our house."

Mrs. Jacobs emptied the porters into a tin pan, and thanked the giver of them. She acknowledged that, for the delicacy mentioned by Mrs. Winslow, "there wa'n't nothin' to be compared to porters."

Mrs. Winslow talked some of the crops; she mentioned how young Wistar seemed "to be wastin' away, 'thout nothin' you could put yer finger on bein' the matter of him." She said "they'd ben havin' another quarrel in the orthodox choir, 'n' Jane Rand had said she'd never set in them seats agin the longest day she lived."

To this Mrs. Jacobs remarked, dryly, that "she wa'n't goin' to worry about that, for Jane Rand had said so a good many times before."

From the choir Mrs. Winslow touched on what she called the "revivil meetin's" in her church. She said "they had been greatly blessed so fur." The evangelist they had engaged had proved even more powerful than report had told.

She secretly wished that Mrs. Lander were not present; but that lady retained her seat, and was so pleasant that Mrs. Winslow could hardly believe she had been the one who had spoken as she had done the day before. The New York lady was like that girl who had the curl on her forehead, in that when she was good she was very, very good.

Finally the visitor rose. She looked some-

what embarrassed as she remarked that "she didn't want no hard feelin's among neighbors," and she hoped that Dally hadn't run away from her.

Mrs. Jacobs said that the child "had jest gone out."

It became evident that Dally would have to be summoned. She came slowly in and stood by the door, with her hands behind her and her head thrown back.

Mrs. Winslow again said that she "didn't want no hard feelin's among neighbors."

A trying silence followed these words, for Dally made no response.

"Mebby I was a little ha'sh yisterdy," said the woman.

Dally now looked at her.

"Yes, ma'am," she said, "yo' was."

Mrs. Winslow was somewhat disconcerted, and Mrs. Jacobs began to worry about what Dally might say or do. She looked at her apprehensively.

"Mebby 'twould have ben jest as well if I hadn't ben quite so ha'sh," said the visitor.

The widow, watching, saw that the girl was not going to reply, and she hastened to say that she hoped they'd all let by-gones be by-

gones, and act like Christians. It didn't look very well to harbor malice, 'n' for her part, she didn't mean to do it, nor let Dally.

Upon this Mrs. Winslow departed with her empty basket.

Mrs. Jacobs rose and put her hand on Dally's shoulder.

"We mustn't lay up nothin' aginst her now," she said, gently. "You know you did shet her up; 'n' we want ter be forgiven ourselves."

Dally's eyes turned to her friend's face and softened.

"Ef I ain't good, 'twon't be your fault," she said, tremulously.

X

A NEW-COMER AT THE WIDOW'S

"I'M almost afraid the child is beginnin' to grow up."

It was Mrs. Jacobs who spoke. She was sitting in her front room, placidly braiding old pieces of woollen cloth into a rug. It was a very warm day. Too warm for anybody to work. Mrs. Lander, in some kind of a light gown that was very plain, and yet that fluffed out on the floor at her feet in a way often and silently admired by Dally, was leaning very far back in a long steamer-chair she had once provided for herself in one of her sojourns in this house. She looked half asleep. She had just said that it soothed her to see some one working, and to know that she herself need not lift her finger. She made the statement that she did not think that she should enjoy being lazy if she did not know that thousands were sweating for their bread. That knowledge gave a sweetness to her indolence, she asserted.

Mrs. Jacobs looked up at her shrewdly, the squint in her eye more than usually noticeable.

"You c'n talk like that as much as you want to, to me," she said, "but you needn't let Dally hear you. It's mighty poor stuff for a grown woman to say."

To this Mrs. Lander had replied that she was not going to corrupt Dally in any way. She added that the child now believed that she, Mrs. Lander, was a kind of angel, and she did not wish to undeceive her.

It was at this point in the conversation that Mrs. Jacobs said she was afraid Dally was growing up.

"She may have been older than you thought when you found her down South," she said. "You called her fourteen, you know."

"Yes," said Mrs. Lander, sleepily. "If you want my honest opinion, Mrs. Jacobs, I think it aged her in some way having that struggle to make up her mind to ask Mrs. Winslow's pardon. It was a wrench."

Mrs. Jacobs dropped her braid and clasped her hands over her knee.

"I advised her for her good," she remarked,

earnestly. "I couldn't see no other way. She'd done wrong, you know."

"Yes; but if her confession had been received in the right spirit, the effect would have been so different. It was unfortunate that that woman could be such a — such a devil."

The sentence was finished more softly than her other words had been spoken.

"We can't help folks bein' devils," said Mrs. Jacobs.

"No; but we can refrain from abasing ourselves to them."

The widow clasped her hands still more tightly on her knee. Her face was more and more overcast. She usually knew decidedly what she thought, but in regard to Dally her anxiety made her sometimes almost vacillating.

"You think I done wrong?" she asked.

"I think you were the cause of Mrs. Winslow's committing the sin of not forgiving."

"I tell you I'm not goin' to saddle myself with her sins," energetically exclaimed the widow. "She may take care of herself."

"She will. Let her alone for that."

Mrs. Lander closed her eyes as if for a nap.

But her companion knew she was not asleep, and had no compunction in speaking again, after a silence.

"It's Dally I'm thinkin' about. She's grown like a weed lately. I do hope I ain't got to put long clo'es onto her. 'N' she seems kinder more mature like."

"If she lives she will be obliged to get kind of mature. It's the penalty we pay to the years," came from the long chair.

"Oh, I do hope I sh'll bring her up right!" cried Mrs. Jacobs, in an undertone, as if to herself.

"What if you should shift the responsibility to me?" inquired Mrs. Lander.

"What?"

Mrs. Jacobs rose suddenly, letting her scissors fall with a clatter.

The other woman opened her eyes, and looked with slow intentness at her companion. As for Mrs. Jacobs, she felt as if she had been struck. She had never thought of this. She believed she knew Mrs. Lander well enough to be convinced that she would not want the trouble of Dally.

"You look as if I were a tiger, threatening to devour the child," said Mrs. Lander, now

waving an old-fashioned feather fan that had lain in her lap.

There was no reply. The widow was frightened at the bare thought of life without Dally. Why, Dally had become what seemed life itself.

She tried to draw herself up with the question, sharply asked of herself, "Is it for her good? Not for outward good, but for the soul, the individual, everlasting soul?"

But if Mrs. Lander ever wanted her, the time had not yet come; at least, she thought not.

"Don't get excited," she said, soothingly. "I won't take her now. She shall be a still further discipline for Mrs. Winslow. I see you are attached to her."

"Attached to her!" repeated Mrs. Jacobs, almost with a sob. But her eyes were dry. Her heart was burning. How foolish she had been, after all these years, to really love anything!

"Don't suffer," gently exclaimed Mrs. Lander. The tone was as if she had recommended her friend not to take cold; but the look in her face bore a very different interpretation. She sat upright in her chair, and put out her hand to touch the widow's arm.

"Are you sorry I sent her here?" she asked.

"No, no," was the reply. Mrs. Jacobs went out of the room. She mounted the stairs to that spare chamber where she was accustomed to go when she wished to be entirely undisturbed. But, with her hand on the door, she remembered that the spare chamber was now Mrs. Lander's room.

She stood a moment.

"'Tain't no use thinkin'," she said, in a whisper. "I know Lowizy Lander like a book; she's soft, 'n' she's sweet, 'n' she's generous, 'n' you can't help likin' her; but when she wants her own way she's goin' to have it."

Mrs. Jacobs went resolutely down-stairs again, and, still with that air of resolution, she began picking up Baldwin apples to dry —apples, as she said, were "skerce" this year, and she must make the most of them. She and all of the folks near had already begun "to dry." But she did not experience the usual pleasant sense of thrift because she was saving something. The September sunshine was not sunshine to her. To have Dally taken away from her—she could not

bear that. She looked vacantly at the Baldwins ("Baldins" she called them). She stood with one in her hand, her eyes fixed on the bluish-red flush on one side of it. It seemed to her that her whole body was suffering, as well as her mind. She kept saying, mechanically, but noiselessly:

"When Lowizy Lander wants her own way, she's goin' to have it."

Suddenly there was a rustle in the weeds behind her, the other side of the wall. Something sprang over and began tossing up the apples and running after them. It was Dally's puppy, and was followed almost immediately by Dally herself, who came running with such an impetus as almost to fall over the apple basket.

She had the skirt of her tire twisted up and held tightly in one hand. As soon as she could she opened it, and revealed a quantity of vivid blue "dangleberries," the last of the huckleberry family that linger in the autumn in upland pastures.

"One more pie, aunty!" she cried, in her joyous young voice. "And only think, Sam picked, too; he picked an' et, but I only et thur fust two or three. Why, aunty, what's thur matter?"

Dally was looking with instant solicitude at her companion. Sam, the puppy, frisked and wagged unheeded. Mrs. Jacobs obeyed her first impulse, and answered promptly, "Nothin'."

But Dally was not satisfied. "'Tain't nothin' I've done?" she questioned.

"Oh, no." Then Mrs. Jacobs asked, "I s'pose you've ben tollerble happy here, ain't you, Dally?"

"Yo' ain't gwine ter send me away, be yo'?" in quick terror.

The free hand clung to the woman's skirts.

"I never sh'll do that," answered Mrs. Jacobs, with what seemed unnecessary fervor.

Dally was so relieved that she could now give the information that she had had but two trials since she came to Ransom.

"If I had my way," responded the widow, "you never should have a trial in the world."

There was an unusual ring in the voice which greatly impressed the girl. She felt as if something were going to happen.

"Yes'm," she said, seriously, "I've had two, 'n' I've got 'um now. You know they tell to thur prayer meetin's how we all have our burdens, so I reckon as thur Lord 'lows

we've gurt ter have 'um. I'll tell yo' mine. When I ain't too sleepy, I pray 'bout 'um. But mostly I'm too sleepy. One is that I ain't gurt Barker. I keeper thinkin' of him down thur with Old Tid. Yo' don't know Old Tid. She's thur wussest critter God ever made; 'thout it's Mrs. Winslow. Ef Mrs. Winslow'd ben livin' on White Crow, I reckon she'd ben kind of er Old Tid. Such er word as cuss must er been made ter call such folks by. But I know it's wicked ter say cuss, 'n' I ain't er gwine ter."

Dally's voice paused; she stood holding up her tire of dangleberries with one hand, while the other grasped Mrs. Jacobs's skirt. The girl was looking intently off towards the horizon, where a few low hills were beginning to glow in the slanting western light.

Her face was not so childish as when she came. And Mrs. Jacobs noticed that her frock needed another tuck let out.

"And what else plagues you?" asked Mrs. Jacobs.

Dally looked up confidingly, and said, promptly:

"Mrs. Winslow!"

"But you done your duty, 'n' confessed, 'n'

arsked forgiveness, 'n' she forgave you!" returned the other.

"She said she forgive me. Bill made her. But she ain't done hit—she ain't done hit," answered Dally. "An' oh, aunty, I ain't gurt over havin' ter arsk her. It was so awful! It hurt so! An' how she looked at me!"

Dally's tanned hand left its hold on the skirt, and was unconsciously pressed against her bosom.

The elder face became so wrung with unhappy doubt as Mrs. Jacobs heard these words, and the tones in which they were spoken, that she turned quickly away lest Dally should see it. But Dally had seen it, and hurried to say:

"I 'low it was right fur me to do hit, aunty, 'cos yo' said so; an' I'd done wuss fur yo', but—"

The girl paused. Mrs. Lander was sauntering across the yard to them. Mrs. Jacobs started, and said it was high time she made a fire for tea. She took off Dally's apron of berries, and went towards the house. The sun sank behind Bald Hill, and twilight seemed to come almost immediately. When the tea-kettle was over the fresh fire, Mrs. Jacobs was

so uneasy that she went out again into the yard, where Mrs. Lander and Dally were now leaning against the fence, with Sam capering 'round them.

The widow could hear the lady's melodious, leisurely tones, and she could see the turn of the girl's head as she looked up at her. There was nothing in Mrs. Jacobs's manner, as she approached the two, which could have hinted at the pang in her heart.

Before she spoke, the puppy ran down the road, giving short barks of welcome, and presently two figures emerged into sight. Marietta Winslow cried out excitedly, as she skipped forward:

"Oh, Dally, you can't never guess what Bill's got for ye!"

The tall figure of young Winslow followed behind his sister. He held an unpainted box under his arm, and in the box was heard a scuttling sound.

"Oh, Dally!" cried Marietta again, "I wanted him ter give it ter me, but he said he'd ben tamin' it for you all the time he's ben in Snapit."

Bill set the box on the flat top of the fence.

It was then seen that the upper part and one side were wire.

"It's a gray squirrel!" exclaimed Dally, clasping her hands as she stood up tall to look into the box.

Bill nodded. He was looking at Dally, and Mrs. Lander and Mrs. Jacobs were looking at him; the same expression was on each of their faces.

The young fellow seemed to the women to have grown more manly since his visit away from home; taller and more decisive, the boyish face having settled into more positive lines.

"I can tame er squirrel," said Dally, raising her eyes to the boy; "I c'n tame er heap er wild things—I useter, on White Crow." Her face darkened as she added, "but Ole Tid mostly killed um when she wor drunk."

These last words reminded her of the pledge she had taken, and she remarked that she "warn't gwine ter drink no more liquor of any kind."

"Dally!" said Mrs. Jacobs. Mrs. Lander laughed slightly, and put her hand on Dally's shoulder.

Marietta stared. She had heard about

Dally's drinking all the Widder 'Bijah's liquor; but it appeared something dreadful to her to hear Dally refer to the fact.

Bill broke the silence by saying that he would put the cage wherever Dally liked.

Mrs. Jacobs said she would be pleased to have both the children come in, if their mother hadn't no objections to their visiting Dally.

She pronounced these words proudly, as if it mattered little to her even though Mrs. Winslow had such objections.

Bill stood up very straight and tall, and his sister and Dally fixed their eyes on him in undisguised admiration.

"My mother hasn't the slightest objections," he said; "she knows Met and I were coming here."

"William, I congratulate you," said Mrs. Lander, in her most winning voice. She put out a very white hand to the boy, who blushed deeply as he took it and held it a minute. He knew all she meant by her words. He wished he might kiss the hand that was so warm and soft and flattering. But he did not quite know how to do that. He sighed as he dropped it.

He lifted the cage again, and the group started to the house.

Dally, whose senses were almost as acute as those of the animals on her native mountains, paused in her walk behind the others along the path.

"I hear steps," she said. The rest went on, expecting her to follow. At the door Bill stopped and then turned back, standing a few feet from the girl, watching her.

"What did you think you heard?" he asked.

She raised her hand. He saw the glow of her eyes in the semi-darkness.

"Steps!" she replied, in a whisper.

A short figure became visible close by the gate. It seemed to hesitate, though it did not stop.

Dally wavered an instant as she looked at it. Then she cried out, in a shrill, strong voice, "Barker!"

XI

MR. DODSON GIVES BARKER A LIFT

MR. DODSON usually made it a point to reach the station in Farnham about half an hour before the arrival of the train he was to meet. He liked to "stand round" on the platform and watch the station-agent roll about the two or three boxes and casks that were generally there, and that seemed to be the identical boxes and casks that had always been there. There never were any more, and apparently never any less. It was almost an excitement to Mr. Dodson to see that track stretching away over the solitary country, and to see those casks, and he was not going to give up that excitement, even though passengers whom he brought to go to Providence in this train from Boston, which he met, strongly objected to being obliged to start so early and spend so much time in that station.

But it was of no use remonstrating. Mr.

Dodson used to listen to such remonstrances, then tilt his tall hat a little farther back, and say he "guessed he sh'd have ter start 'bout the same time he'd ben startin'."

As his horse went so slowly, and he stopped so long in Farnham, indulging in his favorite dissipation of staring at freight, it came to pass that Mr. Dodson did not have time to do anything else all day, but to go in the morning and again at night. And this arrangement suited him; he was perfectly happy in it, and often told people he didn't know what he should do if he didn't keep so busy all the time; he reckoned if he were not so busy that his mind would be too much for him. In what way his mind was going to get the better of him he did not state. The Dodson place had been "nothin' but wrack 'n' ruin" for some years. Mrs. Dodson, a pale, dejected-looking woman, who was always patching her husband's flannel shirts, was continually making the statement that "she s'posed Josephus would er done something ter the farm, but he was so awful busy he couldn't; and that's all there was about it; Josephus could not." It was thus that Josephus continued year after year to drive

the "deepo' wagon;" and year after year his mind did not get the better of him.

The fact that his wife had all and more than she could do to take care of the hens and cows and the housework may be the reason why she never meddled in "public matters." Mr. Dodson, as we have said, could not "abide women" who had anything to do in "public matters." He had a niece, resident in an adjoining town, who was a member of the school committee there. Mr. Dodson often said if he "only wasn't so busy he should of ridden over 'n' seen about it." But as he never found time to ride over and see about it, the niece remained on the school board. Still, Josephus felt it a disgrace to the family. He was speaking very feelingly of this disgrace to a passenger who wanted to ride from Snapit to Ransom Centre. He sometimes picked up a person to take for a mile or two, and always charged fifteen cents, if only for a dozen rods. He explained that it was "consid'able trouble ter stop, 'n' 'twas more for stoppin' than for goin' that he had to charge."

"There seems to be er heap, or somethin', in the road there," interrupted this passen-

ger at the third recital of the Dodson family disgrace.

Mr. Dodson was displeased to be interrupted. He clucked to his horse, and said, slightingly, that he "guessed it wa'n't nothin' more'n bushes."

But it was not bushes. It was a boy asleep in a huddle, like an animal. In fact, it was Barker. He was on his way to Dally. He had come up in freight cars. He had suffered a good deal; but he was used to suffering. He had not much mind, and perhaps that was fortunate, for thus he did not perceive the vastness and number of the difficulties in his way. He had no particular morals, and could not be restrained by conscientious scruples from anything he wished to do, or from pilfering any kind of goods or eatables that were within reach. He did not starve, for he could usually find the dinner-pail of some freightman.

To begin with, he was started on his way by some person's paying his fare as far as Richmond. But he was such a wretch to look at and to smell that a fastidious conductor put him in a freight train, with the

remark that it wasn't his business to take vermin over the country.

From the moment of his running from Ole Tid to Asheville, in North Carolina, his whole mind had been bent on keeping a scrap of paper which Dally had sent to him, by forwarding it by mail to a woman who lived near White Crow Mounting. This woman could read; she sometimes heard from the post-office nearest White Crow, for sometimes she rode on her old horse over the eight miles of red "State road" between her home and the office. And she had two or three times been kind to the dirty, ragged girl who was then one of "Ole Tid's brats."

It was, therefore, this woman to whom Dally, the moment she had learned how to do it, had sent a laboriously printed note as follows:

"I pray too God yole giv this papir to Barker. It is whar i amm. He must kepe hit, furr it wil tote him to me."

The paper bore, in Dally's print, these words:

"Thurr widder bijah Jacobs ransom massychoosits nigh ter borston."

That kind-hearted person, who had sent Barker as far as Richmond, had deciphered this document, and had pinned on to the boy's jacket a correct and plain translation.

As Mr. Dodson, who naturally had plenty of time, bent over the sleeping Barker, the first thing he saw was the card fastened to him. He read it. He read it again.

"Land o' liberty!" he exclaimed, with something like animation. "If this ain't another critter for the Widder 'Bijah! She simps to be sort of runnin' to them kind. He's dressed well enough, too. I swan, I'm beat! Do you s'pose she sent for him?"

"He's dressed well enough, that's a fact—better'n my boy dresses," remarked the passenger.

It was true that the boy had on a gray knickerbocker suit. It was the gift of Miss Pelham, in the next town. She had found him in the freight-car, where she had been looking for some goods. She had kept him overnight. He had left her house early that morning to walk to that place where Dally was. But he had wandered hours over wrong roads, and had finally lain down in the sunlight and gone to sleep.

Mr. Dodson touched the boy with his foot.

"P'raps I'll give him a lift, if he's goin' my way," he said.

"I guess he ain't got no fifteen cents," said the passenger.

Mr. Dodson did not reply. He had an idea. If he spoke directly he was afraid he might lose the idea.

Barker slept very heavily; Mr. Dodson touched him more decidedly with his boot, and continued to touch him until the boy moved, opened his eyes, and drawled,

"Be Dally thur?"

"No, she ain't here," was the answer, "but I'm goin' within a mild of her, 'n' I'll take ye. Git in."

Barker rose slowly. Mr. Dodson brought his horse back from among the golden-rod at the roadside, where it was browsing.

The boy stood in a kind of crouching position. He did not stir when horse and wagon were again in the middle of the highway.

"Get in," said Mr. Dodson.

"Thur?" asked Barker.

The passenger, who was a spare, wiry man of quick motions, took hold of the boy's arm

impatiently and thrust him forward, asking whether he could move or not.

Something inside of Barker's tightly buttoned jacket made a chinking sound as he climbed into the wagon.

"Mebby the chap is stuffed full of silver dollars," said the man, with a laugh; "he climbs as if he was."

Not only did Barker chink, but the front of his jacket bulged out. He took no notice of what was said, but lapsed, rather than sat, down on the seat.

Two or three times one of the men put a question to him, but he made no reply beyond an inarticulate sound. He seemed almost like an inert mass. Still his eyes sometimes looked out on the fast darkening landscape. Once, after such a look, his gaze came round to Mr. Dodson, and he asked:

"Ain't you-uns gurt no mountings?"

"We git 'long well enough 'thout 'um," answered the driver, cheerfully. "If we don't have 'um, we don't have ter climb 'um."

Barker looked out again. Then he said:

"I reckon I should want mountings."

The passenger remarked that he was "sorry they couldn't 'commydate him."

Very soon after this access of conversation the spare man left and walked briskly up a lane in the gathering twilight.

When he was alone with the boy, Mr. Dodson inquired if the Widder 'Bijah had sent for him.

"Sont fur me?" repeated Barker, vaguely.

"Yes, sent for you?"

"I d'know," said Barker. "She mought er sont, but I d'know."

"Goodness!" cried Mr. Dodson, "I sh'd think you'd know that."

Barker said nothing.

"Be you any relation to that gal with the widder?" he asked.

"Relation?" repeated the boy, his eyes groping over Mr. Dodson's face.

"Mercy! Don't you know what relation means?"

Barker made no attempt at a reply. Mr. Dodson sat in puzzled silence, expectorating a good deal. He wondered if his idea would answer, after all.

After a while he tried another experiment.

"I s'pose, now, you c'n milk cows first-rate?"

"I hev milked strays as curm urp the mounting."

Mr. Dodson felt encouraged.

"'N' taken care er hens, too?" he said, feeling sure that the boy must have meant cows when he used the word "strays."

Barker shook his head. It was too much effort for him to reply. He wished the man would be quiet. There was no use in talking.

Mr. Dodson was discouraged now, and did not speak again until he pulled in his horse at a corner, and remarked that he "s'posed his companion hadn't got fifteen cents about him." Barker again shook his head; . . . the man explained that fifteen cents was his usual charge for picking up anybody between Farnham and Ransom. If Barker heard this explanation he made no sign of having heard it. He remained in his seat until he was told that the reason they were stopping was because this was the place for him "to git out."

Barker got out. When he was on his feet he asked:

"Whar's hit at?"

"Jew mean the widder's?"

"Thur place on this"—the boy put his hand on the paper on his jacket.

Mr. Dodson leaned forward, and told Barker that if he "wasn't a born idjit he could find it plain enough—'bout a mild, straight down that road."

Barker turned the corner without a word, in the direction the man had pointed, and went along into the darkness. He walked with a peculiar gait, lifting his legs as if he were climbing an ascent, and hardly knew how to walk on level ground.

Mr. Dodson sat with his arms on his knees, watching the awkward figure melt into the night. At last he gathered up the reins, and said aloud, with a great deal of emphasis:

"I declare!" and clucked to his horse. After an interval he said, again aloud, "I guess I'll speak to Mis' Dodson about it."

He always spoke of his wife as "Mis' Dodson," evidently thinking that the dignity of the position given her by her marriage with him demanded such a title, even in the familiarity of their home.

Barker walked on, his hands hanging down, his cap far back on his head. He kept stumbling. He thought he stumbled because the ground was level. He had not known until

he left Asheville that there were places in the world without mountains.

His sleep had revived him somewhat, but his mind was even less clear than usual, for he was dazed with his long journey. He did not stop walking. The stars came out with the wonderful brilliance that they have in September. The crickets were making a great deal of noise, and the katydids here and there uttered their assertion and denial. The boy, however, did not think of the stars, or the crickets, or the katydids. Could his face have been seen, one would have said that he did not think of anything.

Mr. Dodson had told him that the place on the card fastened to his jacket was "about a mild." Barker had no idea how far that was. He passed three farm-houses, removed somewhat from each other; he stopped at each one and prowled until a man or boy, coming from the house to go to the barn for "chores," found him. By the light of the lanterns they carried they read the card, and told him to go straight on. They asked a great many questions, but he did not answer any of them.

The universal decision among them was

that "if the Widder 'Bijah took him, she'd have her hands fuller than they'd ever ben yet."

At one of the houses a dog bounced out growling at him; the animal evidently intended to seize the boy by the ankle; but as Barker stood perfectly still, the dog was so astonished that he relinquished the intention, and merely remained on guard, muttering in his throat until his master came out to see what was the matter.

Thus, at last, Barker came to the little gate where Dally had stood some months before. He hesitated; he saw a figure on the path near the door. He wondered when he should come to the right house, and whether the next dog would really bite him.

The figure in the path came nearer to him. The brilliant starlight shone on the faces of both. The boy did not move or speak, but he knew her. It was Dally who cried out, "Barker!"

XII

WHAT BARKER BROUGHT TO DALLY

MRS. JACOBS, mixing a "cushion cake" for her belated supper, heard Dally's excited cry of recognition, and ran through the sitting-room to the front door, scattering flour from her hands as she went.

Mrs. Lander, with a white shawl over her shoulders, was leaning against one side of the door. Bill Winslow's tall, slim figure was seen in the path near the gate, and just outside the gate Dally was standing, grasping Barker by the shoulders.

"Has anything happened," asked Mrs. Jacobs, peering out into the darkness, her eyes blinded by just coming from the kitchen lamp. "Where's Dally?"

"I suspect you have a guest, Mrs. Jacobs," Mrs. Lander's somewhat mocking voice replied. "I suspect Barker has arrived."

"Yes, ma'am," piped up an eager tone from

the denser gloom under the lilac, "she called him Barker. It's him."

It was Marietta who spoke. She longed to rush out where Dally was, but a feeling that she might intrude restrained her; and she had gone under the lilac, but had taken in every smallest detail of this meeting. She considered that she was highly favored in that she happened to be present. She wondered what Bill thought. Since Bill had been to High School and begun to use his verbs and other parts of speech with more correctness, and also talked of going to college, Marietta had accesses of something like awe in her thoughts of her brother.

If she could find out what Bill thought about this new-comer, it would settle things a good deal in her mind.

She told herself she would know all about it on their walk home. So she tried to wait, meanwhile straining her eyes and ears from her retreat.

Mrs. Jacobs returned immediately to the kitchen, and brought back the lamp, which she held up over her head, trying to see the group by the gate.

"If anybody's come, Dally," she called out,

with forced cheerfulness, "bring 'em right in."

The rays of the lamp fell on the girl and boy as they approached slowly up the path, Dally leading him, with a hand gripped tightly upon his sleeve.

Bill Winslow moved out of the way to let them pass. He was looking at Dally, seeing the absolute radiance of her face. She did not seem to see him, but went on, her gaze on the woman who stood with the lamp, and who had been, as the child so often thought, "heavenly kind" to her.

Mrs. Lander pulled her gown aside as Barker came through the doorway. Her face expressed no feeling towards the boy, but she glanced with softening eyes at Dally, who was following the widow into the kitchen.

Outside, Marietta made a movement to press forward into the house, but Bill said, gruffly:

"Come along, Met; we'll go home," and the two walked silently along the vocal and odorous country road. Somehow Marietta could not ask her brother the questions she had intended.

When they were near their home the girl

said, timidly, that she hoped "mar wouldn't begin to fling 'cause Barker 'd come."

"I'll fix mar," was the irreverent response.

In the cosey Jacobs kitchen Dally, standing beside the strange boy and looking with confident eyes at Mrs. Jacobs, said:

"Aunty, this is Barker."

Barker raised heavy eyelids, and directed dull eyes at Mrs. Jacobs, who appeared to have, for an instant, a little difficulty in finding her voice.

When it did come, in spite of all her efforts, it was a trifle dry and hard.

"He must be mighty hungry 'n' tired. Let him set right down in that rocker while I finish gittin' supper."

The boy sat down in the rocker, and Dally stood beside him. Mrs. Lander placed herself in another chair, and contemplated the two.

She had no hesitation in telling herself that that lump of coarse clay made her sick. She decided that it was not because Barker's face was so ugly to look at. It was his personality, his individuality.

What had the brute come for? And now he had come, why wasn't he glad to see Dally? He sat there, heavy, leaden.

The women, the one who watched him and the one who was preparing his supper, knew that the room was no longer cosey. Its cheery, homelike feeling was gone.

Did Dally know it? Mrs. Jacobs, fighting hard against what might be an injustice to the boy, looked at the girl. Thus looking, her eyes caught Dally's glance, full, trusting. But as the young gaze dwelt for an instant on the careworn face, a troubled expression came to it.

Was it possible that any one was not glad to see Barker?

The girl turned towards Mrs. Lander, and that lady gave her a very sweet but rather impersonal smile, which failed to cheer her or to clear up matters any.

Was there any defiance in the cloud that came on Dally's face? She turned back to the boy, whose head hung forward, as if he were asleep. Only Dally, who was familiar with his ways, knew he was not asleep.

"I wish you'd set the table, Dally," called out Mrs. Jacobs from the buttery. The girl started alertly forward, and gladly began her work. Mrs. Lander, tired of seeing that creature in the large chair, sauntered out into the

yard, and strolled about until she was called to supper. She hesitated when she saw that the boy had already been placed at the table. There was haughtiness in the way she said that she could wait, and take her supper later.

The Widder 'Bijah had had too many poor-house people as her guests to shrink from this stranger, who, thanks to the kind offices of Miss Pelham the night before, was not nearly so dirty as he might have been. After Dally had guided him to the sink and made him wash face and hands, he was respectable, so far as cleanliness went. He ate ravenously, and like an animal.

Mrs. Jacobs, during the process, could only tell herself that she wished she was out on the stoop with Mrs. Lander. But she sat at her post, and kept giving great pieces of hot cake to the boy, and filling his cup with well-sweetened tea. As for Dally, she did not even pretend to eat. The mingling of joy and anxiety made her eyes dilate and her face pale.

Barker did not change much under the influence of food and drink. The doughy, underdone aspect of his face was, possibly, a trifle less pronounced.

It was warm in the little kitchen. The atmosphere and the hot tea made the moisture stand on Barker's forehead and cheeks.

"Why don't you unbutton your jacket?" asked Mrs. Jacobs. "You'd be more comfortable."

The boy made an inarticulate sound, but no movement to do as Mrs. Jacobs had suggested. Dally slipped round from her seat to his side and put her hand on the top button. He pushed the hand down roughly, but still slowly. He was slow about everything.

"They'll drap out if yo' do hit," he said.

It was with difficulty that the widow kept her seat. She conquered an almost irresistible inclination to go and shake the boy furiously.

"What'll drop out?" asked Dally, standing back from his chair and putting her hands behind her in a way she had.

"Them."

"Can't you tell?" she asked again.

He grunted.

At this moment Mrs. Lander came in, and Mrs. Jacobs handed her a cup of tea, which she sipped leaning on her empty chair.

Dally turned towards the widow. "Aunty," she said, "he must be awful tired."

The girl was trying to understand her own feelings. She had known through all their childhood that Barker was not like her. But on White Crow it had all been so different. Living there with Ole Tid, Barker's face and manner and soul had not contrasted unfavorably with his surroundings. Now Dally's confusion became more and more painful. That confusion and her surprise struggled with a sense of loyalty and made her heart ache strangely. She did not in the least know what was the matter. She only knew that now, when Barker, whom she had so much desired, had really come, she was poignantly unhappy. She did not understand. She wanted to spring like a tiger at Mrs. Lander, who had calmly refused to eat with Barker. But even in that feeling was a dim sense that she did not blame Mrs. Lander, or any one, for not wishing to eat with him. It was a shock to herself. She hated to see him gobble and suck, and breathe hard over his food and drink.

And now, what horrible thing was coming out about why he would not have his jacket unfastened?

She had an intuitive sense that "Aunty" would find out before the boy was allowed to go to bed. And she was right.

Mrs. Jacobs's suspicions were fully aroused.

After the supper dishes were washed, during which process the new guest sat again in the big rocker, and Mrs. Lander appeared to be reading a magazine at a lamp-stand, the widow turned towards Barker and said:

"If you're goin' ter stay here, I guess you'll have to tell me about what you've brought."

Barker moved slightly, but did not speak. He looked at Dally, who stood near, palpitating with excitement. The muscles of his face stirred in such a way that the spectators almost thought he smiled, although his eyes did not change.

"Fur her," he said, moving his head towards Dally.

"Something you brought for her?" repeated Mrs. Jacobs, cheerfully. "Well, what is it?"

Mrs. Lander laid down her magazine. She supposed such creatures were necessary in the world.

Barker's stubby hand began to open his jacket.

"I gurt um fur her," he said. "I 'lowed she war fond of um. Thur wa'n't nary er thing round, an' I took um easy. An' I run."

He held his jacket together at the bottom, and with great deliberation removed, one by one, eight heavy silver tablespoons, three teaspoons, and five forks. He put them on the wide hearth of the cookstove, near which he stood.

Mrs. Lander rose and came forward. One glance at this silver showed that it was of such weight and such workmanship as is found only in the homes of wealth.

She took up a spoon. "You have excellent taste, Barker," she remarked, as she looked at it.

Dally turned ferociously towards her. But Mrs. Lander was equal to this phase of the girl. She felt that she could not bear to lose that fresh, sweet adoration which had been offered her. She clasped Dally's clenched hand; she drew her to her in spite of some resistance. She held her close against her side, and bent over her, saying tenderly:

"Dear child! Do you think I will endure to have you angry with me? I am not going to have anything, not even Barker, come between us."

This was not in the least an apology, but Dally thought it was. And older people were not often able to hold out against a certain cadence in Mrs. Lander's voice.

Mrs. Jacobs had gathered the silver from the stove-hearth, and was putting it carefully in a fine napkin.

"I see it is marked 'Pelham'," said Mrs. Lander, still keeping Dally close to her, perhaps knowing what power contact with her had upon the girl.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Jacobs, sternly.

"You can easily send it back," continued Mrs. Lander.

"Yes," said Mrs. Jacobs again.

She continued to roll the napkin about the spoons. She would have said that she was "trying to see light." Her way looked extremely dark before her. In addition to being deeply repulsive, this creature was also a thief.

She kept thrusting back from her the temptation to put Barker in care of the selectmen

and let him be taken straight to the poor-house. She revolted at the thought of his being under her roof, even for one night.

Mingled with this temptation came the memory of her monthly contributions for foreign missions. Why did she contribute to the heathen? Why was she a Christian? It had been a happiness, mingled with a great deal of puzzled care, to take Dally. But this being! Had he a soul, and was it as precious as Dally's? It was a part of Mrs. Jacobs's creed always to think of souls. Mrs. Lander often told her that she believed souls were just as well left to take care of themselves; if you thought of them you were sure to be uncomfortable. And why be uncomfortable?

"I'll go over myself in the morning," at last said Mrs. Jacobs, tying a white string around the package.

Barker clumsily got out of his chair and stood by it. He was holding tight to each side of his jacket. His half-torpid eyes were fixed on the widow as she stood, resolved and alert.

"Yo' needn't be afeared," he said. "They won't cotch me. Dally'll like thur spoons."

Mrs. Jacobs groaned.

"You stole um," she said. "And from folks who were kind to ye."

"But they won't cotch me," repeated Barker. He added that Dally liked "shiny things."

As for Dally, she seemed incapable of speech for the moment.

Mrs. Jacobs was not going to stand and argue with the boy. She told him sharply that he need not speak again. He had stolen the silver from the Pelham house. It should be carried back.

She made up a bed on the old settee in the kitchen. She sent Dally up-stairs to bed, and she waited until Barker was asleep, which was as soon as he lay down; then she carefully locked him in and went to the sitting-room, where Mrs. Lander was still engaged with her magazine.

"Don't talk!" exclaimed the widow, as she sat down. "I've got a mighty sight of thinkin' to do between now 'n' mornin', 'n' I want all my wits about me. I guess I shall need what mind I've got, 'n' more, too."

It was Dally who returned the silver. She begged to do it. She walked over to Lane-

ville with it. As she was passing by the Winslows' the door opened, and Bill came out on his way to school.

He was struck by the tragedy in Dally's face. He walked beside her, but did not speak until they were out of sight of the Winslows'.

"What is the matter?" he asked. Then he exclaimed, impetuously: "Do let me help you!"

The voice and the look of the boy were too much for Dally's self-possession. She suddenly began to cry in such a tornado-like way as to make her companion wild with wonder and sympathy. She had not slept, she had not cried, all night. She had not known how to deal with the emotions that thronged upon her and tossed her about through the dark hours. She had wanted Barker; but it was "horrid" to have him. Why was it horrid? Hadn't she known before that he was a dirty little lump of a wretch, who always stole when he had a chance? But he had thought to please her with that silver. She couldn't have him live with her; she couldn't have him go away. She should never be happy again.

Bill silently took the package from Dally. It seemed to burden her. She bent over and wrung her hands. She made heart-breaking little moans. The worst of her suffering came from the consciousness that she was not really loyal to Barker. If she were, would she be disgusted? She could not remember that she used to be disgusted.

XIII

MR. DODSON ACTS UPON HIS IDEA

THE Jacobs neighborhood was excited. There was a certain holy horror mingled with the excitement that made it intensely enjoyable. The woman who had once come to Mrs. Jacobs for cherry rum for her daughter's "cholery morbus," and who had found that Dally had taken that rum, this woman told every one she saw that "things wa'n't as they used to be; things wa'n't right. She didn't think 'twas fittin' for the Widder 'Bijah to carry on with sech a high hand."

The general feeling seemed to be that the widow ought to be spoken to. But when it came to trying to decide who should speak to her, no one seemed eager for that duty. The unanimous vote fell upon Mrs. Peter Winslow, but, to the surprise of all, that lady refused point blank to meddle. She said with decision that "she wouldn't touch the matter with a ten-foot pole."

It was then remembered and commented upon that Mrs. Winslow had not been heard to join in the conversation about the "doin's" at the Jacobs place. She listened eagerly to all talk, but when any one turned to her she only nipped her lips in and said she "hadn't nothin' to say."

The reason for this reticence was because her son William, true to his assertion to his sister, had "fixed his mother."

That morning when he had joined Dally, who was on her way to return the stolen silver, he had not only walked as far as the school-house with her, but he had accompanied the girl all the way to Laneville and back. It seemed to him barbarous that she should go alone, suffering as she did. But the two had hardly spoken. When they had parted, not far from Mrs. Jacobs's, Dally had looked solemnly at him, her swollen eyes having an expression which seemed to the boy to "stab right into him." All she had said, however, had been:

"Bill, I thank yo' very much."

Then she had hurried away from him. He had had great difficulty with his Latin and mathematics that day. He did not know

what Dally had carried to Laneville to Miss Pelham's, for he remained behind when she went up to the great mansion from which Barker had stolen the spoons.

He knew she was terribly shaken when she rejoined him. He knew, also, though he told himself he had no reason for knowing, that it all had something to do with that boy, who had come the night before. Nothing could have made him ask a question.

He thought it would be safe to "fix mar" directly. He didn't know what she might do or say if she learned of Barker's arrival before she was fixed. Barker did not appear as if he would be a credit to any one. Bill could not bear to think that creature was any relation to Dally—and how his mother would, as one might say, relish the fact that the creature was the girl's brother.

As soon as Bill walked into the house on his arrival from school, he flung his books down and asked his sister where his mother was. He was informed that she was "tendin' to the dried apples."

Marietta was bursting with long-smothered excitement.

"Oh, Bill," she cried out; "I ain't told her that Barker's come."

"That's the talk," returned Bill, approvingly. "I knew you wouldn't."

Marietta blushed with pride.

"I told par, when he was splittin' wood, 'n' I went for chips," she announced.

"What did par say?"

"He said 'twould be jest as well not to say nothin' 'bout it to mar; she'd hear of it soon 'nough. 'N' he said he guessed there'd be the old Harry to pay."

Bill stood in the middle of the room with his hands in his pockets. His mind was absorbed by the thought of Dally and how she had looked that morning. But he gave a superficial attention to his sister's words.

"I'll go out to mother," he said, in a moment.

Mrs. Winslow's face always lighted at sight of her son. The tall fellow rapidly shuffled the half-dried apples off of the boards into the baskets, that they might be taken in for the night.

He informed his mother, in rather an offhand manner, that Dally's brother, from North Carolina, had come.

"I'll bet he's nothin' to boast of," she said quickly and viciously.

"I guess so, too," was the response. "I saw him. He came while Met and I were there. He's a tough one, by the looks of him. He'll make trouble." Here Bill looked his mother full in the eyes, with that masterful way which she adored, and which she never dared to go against, and said:

"I shall expect you won't say anything to make things unpleasant for the folks over there," nodding his head in the direction of the widow's.

Mrs. Winslow whined a little, rebelliously. She admired her tyrant, but she foresaw how greatly she should be tempted to disobey.

Bill frowned fiercely. He did not waste any more words. He had ruled his mother too many years to have any fears now for his empire.

Therefore it was that Mrs. Winslow did not say anything upon the topic presently much talked of; but she looked all she could.

Barker was supposed to do Mrs. Jacobs's "chores." It is well known in New England that chores include a variety of different kinds of work, but none of it is heavy.

They usually require to be done, mostly, night and morning, with a few duties at noon. A man who is quite feeble is generally able to "do his chores."

When there is only one cow to milk, everything is much easier, for milking has always been considered under this head. Mrs. Jacobs kept one cow, two pigs to "root round" under the barn, about fifty hens, and one old horse. She needed the horse to take her to meeting. She didn't need the pigs, but she said she was used to pigs, and it seemed kind of shiftless not to have one on the place. She was in the habit of doing all her chores herself, as well as her housework. But she hired a man to take care of her garden. Since Dally had come, the two had done the work together, and Mrs. Jacobs was surprised at the amount of enjoyment there was in "puttering round" at the barn and on the farm, with Dally to help. When Dally went to school there was still time in the morning, and the widow had all the day to look for the girl's return. If the elder woman did not care to go out, Dally could do it all alone, and was only subject to such lapses as saved life from being monotonous. You never knew exactly

what Dally might do, but as time went on, the chances grew smaller that it would be anything really dreadful. One of the child's charms was the extent and variety of her possibilities.

And now that Barker had come, Mrs. Jacobs was dreading something all the time.

It was not long before the people near missed their best pears and grapes. There were awful times in hen-roosts. Horses pastured in remote fields had been found "all of a lather." Somebody had ridden them. Cream, in little dairy-houses built over wells, was gone. Woods were set on fire. Eggs were strangely scarce. But all these things put together were not so disagreeable as a curious sense of some evil which pervaded the hamlet.

Peter Winslow, in consultation with his daughter in the wood-house, said he didn't want to blame nobody. It was jest like old witchcraft times. He shouldn't be surprised one bit to see an old woman flying through the sky on a broomstick.

Marietta, who was somewhat literal-minded, immediately asked, "What old woman?"

Mr. Winslow chuckled and hesitated, but finally said:

"I guess yer mother 'd do's well's anybody for a broomstick."

Marietta asserted that mar was too heavy to go in that way. And she began to put unanswerable questions as to how any one could ride a broomstick, and what made the broomstick go, until Mr. Winslow was very sorry he had started the subject.

However strong suspicion might be, as yet no one could say there was the slightest reason that this suspicion should rest on Barker. He did not seem to go anywhere. People driving by the Jacobs farm would often see the boy "low louting" across the yard, perhaps, as he would say, "toting" wood, or with a milk-pail in his hand. If he looked at any one, it was with downward head, in a furtive manner. He was not tall, but had a stunted appearance. Although Mrs. Jacobs faithfully saw that he washed his face and hands before each meal, the boy was always grimy. True to her principles, however, the widow had him sit at the table with her. She said that she did not consider that she was any better than other folks. To this

Mrs. Lander responded that she herself was not considering the question of souls and immortality, but she personally preferred not to see that kind of finger-nails, and not to hear that kind of noise when she was taking her own food and drink. So it came to pass that this lady was served first. Then Mrs. Jacobs and Dally and Barker broke their fast.

But there was no more cheer and happiness at the meals. Dally was not like herself. The boy, however, seemed to be exactly himself. He ate and drank a great deal. If he were any more pleased to be with Dally than not to be with her, no one knew it, not even the girl.

The widow used to see Dally look earnestly at the boy, her mouth drooping and her brow frowning.

When a week or two had passed, a great many of Mrs. Jacobs's hens had died; the cow had "shrunk in her milk" to that degree that the widow was obliged to buy milk of a neighbor. One pig had died, and the other appeared to be ailing.

"And I can't put my finger on a thing," cried the widow to herself.

Mrs. Lander openly asserted and main-

tained that she did not believe the Lord required that the entire neighborhood should be sacrificed in order to give Barker's soul a chance to live. She even went so far as to say that some souls were far more valuable than others, and she did not believe this boy's soul was worth a cent. She occasionally showed by a phrase or word that she had been brought up in New England.

Dally's hound, Sam, at first refused even to stop growling in Barker's presence. He would sit up on his haunches close by his mistress, and keep up a low and almost incessant thunder, his tail stretched out rigidly behind him.

He would wag the tip of this tail a very little when Dally remonstrated, but would not stop growling.

Barker, in his slow, sullen way, once said to Dally that "Mebby he'd pison that critter when he gurt ready."

The girl's eyes flamed. She threw out her hand as if already defending her pet.

"If yo' p'ison him, I'll kill yo'!" she cried.

And then Barker's face, rather than Barker himself, grinned sluggishly. He made no reply, but walked away.

Dally felt that life was getting very hard. Her gray squirrel, which Bill Winslow had given her, was another constant source of anxiety to her. She kept it and the dog where she slept, and every day when she went to school she solemnly committed them to Mrs. Jacobs's care, lest "something might happen to them."

She never said at whose hands something might happen. It was no wonder that the child grew haggard and thin.

It was on one of those days that Mr. Dodson hitched his horse in Mrs. Jacobs's yard, and came in at the back door.

He said he had been so busy he couldn't come before. He said it was a good deal of trouble to go over to the "deepo" twice a day.

To these statements Mrs. Jacobs responded, dryly, that it must be lots of trouble. She wondered why he had come. She did not know that he had been cherishing his idea ever since he had given Barker a lift on the road.

He conversed for a while about the religious interest, which, he was sorry to say, seemed to be subsiding. He thought fewer

sheaves had been gathered for the Master than he had hoped when the revival began.

Mrs. Jacobs waited patiently until he should make known his errand. At last it was revealed that he was so very busy he would like to take Barker over to his place to help him. He "would lodge, 'n' clothe, 'n' victual" the boy for what work he would do. He guessed he would keep him right along.

The widow conscientiously remarked that Barker was not as much help to her as she had hoped; she didn't exactly know why; she didn't want Mr. Dodson to take him under false impressions. She could not help adding, with some art, that "p'raps the boy needed a man."

Mr. Dodson smiled indulgently. He said he didn't know 'bout that, but he guessed Mis' Dodson could manage him. He'd resk Mis' Dodson with 'most any boy. He himself was so busy that he couldn't do much. Mis' Dodson would tend to Barker.

Barker, being brought forward, was torpid as usual. He manifested no repugnance towards going with Mr. Dodson. He did not mention Dally.

When he was in the carriage, Mrs. Jacobs forced herself to tell him that he must remember "that this was his home to come to, any time."

He nodded. And so he went off to be "tended to" by Mis' Dodson.

That night, when Dally went up-stairs to her own little room, the peace that filled her heart was, she feared, something wicked. She could hardly bear to acknowledge to herself that it was peace. She prayed to God to forgive her for being glad that Barker was gone.

XIV

GROWN UP

MARIETTA WINSLOW has grown into a tall girl who has an eye to dress, and who has "steady company." Some call it having "a beau." He came every Sunday evening, and remained until eleven. This is what constitutes "stiddy company."

When a beau has arrived at the ability to visit Sunday evenings, and the fact becomes known, it is tantamount to the announcement of an engagement. The girl is then believed to be "fixing." In other words, she is supposed to be making table-cloths, pillow-cases, and other articles necessary for housekeeping.

If a girl is known to have an admirer, you do not usually ask if she is engaged; you inquire if she is "fixing." You will be understood. There is a certain respect accorded to a young woman in this position. Although

she is not yet married, she will soon be. She has secured, or almost secured, the man. Girls who are not fixing, try, in her company, to seem as if they did not envy her. They talk gayly; they rally the engaged one; they say they have never seen the man yet whom they would even think of marrying. The lucky one appears to believe them.

Marietta was very forbearing in her manner, notwithstanding the exaltation of her position. She wrote to her brother Bill, who was at college, that one of the best things about being engaged was that it made "mar haul in her horns a little." Marietta frankly confessed that she didn't know what she should have done with mar, seeing Bill was away, if she hadn't been engaged. She pitied poor par. When she and Theodore were married she wished par would come and live with her, and let mar go it alone, and see how she liked it. Par almost cried every time the marriage was mentioned. In return, Bill would write that his father must be induced in some way to brace up and call his soul his own. But while he wrote those words he knew that Mrs. Winslow's husband had lived too long with Mrs. Winslow to be

able at this late day to consider his soul as his own particular property.

Even during her courtship, Marietta had never failed in the ardor of her devotion to Dally. She went so far as to tell her "beau" that she did not love him so well as she did Dally. At this information he laughed, having the true masculine disbelief in one woman's love for another.

Nevertheless, Marietta told the truth. Ever since those days when Dally had shut Mrs. Winslow into the cellar, and Bill had made his mother say she forgave the child, there had been in Marietta's feelings towards the Southern waif a fervor and passion and romance by the side of which her affection for Theodore was somewhat prosaic, though it was genuine affection all the same.

Young Graham, generally called "Thodor," was such a good "ketch" that Mrs. Winslow now "knuckled," as she called it, a good deal to the girl who had had the good fortune to attract him. His father owned a large farm over Farnham way, and he had only this son, and no daughters. The Grahams were always "likely" and always "scrabblin'"—better still, they were "forehanded."

Thodor showed his good taste in fancying Marietta, who had lost her freckles, and was now almost brilliant-looking, with her big eyes and her red, saucy mouth, and her tendency to array herself becomingly. She did not show any excessive joy when he spoke to her, and that was an attraction. She even dared to snub him sometimes. The novelty of being snubbed was another attraction. In these New England towns it is a melancholy fact that young men are treated too well. There are so few of them, comparatively, that they are considered precious because they are rare; and they are admired accordingly.

It was a mild day in October. It was also Sunday, and young Graham had come over early, that he might take Marietta to drive in his new buggy. A buggy is a thing that foreigners seem to consider particularly American, and particularly improper, that is, when occupied by a young man and a young woman.

I am glad there was no foreigner, with his note-book, near enough to see the occupants of this buggy, for the note-book would surely have contained the record of the fact that

the man's arm was about the woman's shoulders. Think, then, of the inference—also set down, to be printed as soon as the traveller could fly to his publisher—think, I say, of the inference in regard to the morals of Ransom!

The horse was going a great deal at his own will, cropping a mouthful of oak leaves or a twig here and there by the wayside, and zigzagging the carriage after him.

Marietta was looking absently along the road. Theodore was looking at Marietta. The highway, save for their presence, had been entirely solitary since they entered upon it. That this was its usual condition the grass each side of the horse tracks showed. Possibly the young man had chosen this direction for reasons of this kind.

Marietta was just thinking that here was the place where she and Dally had ridden the bicycle when Mrs. Winslow was in the cellar. Her eyes suddenly became fixed on the farthest curve in the road, where a white hound with large black patches upon it had come into view, walking leisurely and snuffing at different clumps of faded brakes.

Marietta sat straight, and surprise came into her face.

"I do believe that's her hound!" she exclaimed.

"It is certainly a hound," responded the young man, a little irritated that a hound should attract attention from him.

"And she's with him!" now cried Marietta. "Le' me get out quick!"

The horse was pulled in, and, before Graham could help her, his companion was on the ground and running rapidly towards a figure which had now appeared round the same curve from which the dog had come.

The young man stood at his horse's head and watched the two. The figure was that of a girl who was very slender, very erect. and who moved with a curious freedom quite different from the movement of any one he had ever seen. It was a motion as free as the motion of an athletic young man who never thinks of his own limbs; but it suggested nothing masculine.

He saw the two embrace with fervor where they met, a few rods away. He heard a voice say:

"I only came this noon. I could not wait any longer to see you."

He heard Marietta cry out in fervent happiness:

"Oh, Dally!" and saw her fling herself again on her friend.

It was then that Graham exclaimed to himself: "So that is Dally. She is kind of different, that's a fact. But I can't see how she looks, yet."

Presently the two girls came towards him. Marietta introduced him to "Miss Jacobs." Dally said she was very glad to know any one whom Marietta loved. She said it so simply that nobody blushed or was confused. Dally glanced with searching intentness for an instant at Graham, plainly to decide if he were good enough for her friend.

And now Graham could see her face. He thought he was a good judge in such matters. He remembered to have heard when a boy something about the "Widder 'Bijah Jacobs having took a poor gal from Caroliny." When he had heard this fact remarked upon he had, boy-like, instantly formed an opinion. In spite of all Marietta had said, he had held to that opinion ever

since. He had made up his mind that the child was a lying, underhanded, low-lived thing in reality, no matter what she might make people think she was. He had also made up his mind that when Marietta was once his wife she should drop this acquaintance. Being a shrewd youth, however, he had kept this resolution to himself.

In truth, Dally had not grown into the kind of young woman usually admired by men. If she had been pretty as a child, she was not so now. Her hair had retained its almost ashen lightness and its tinge of yellow; it was abundant and soft, and of that kind which, as Marietta said, "was foreverlastin'ly comin' down." Hair-pins did not have sufficient power over it. If a woman who has beautiful eyes cannot be what is here called "homely," then Dally's face is redeemed. But there is too much pathos in these dusky brown eyes. And yet they can sparkle. Her whole face can be almost iridescent, like a child's countenance. But it is the height of folly to try to describe a face. Certainly Dally's features are not describable—it is only the Maud faces which can be fitted with adjectives.

"How did your dog like New York?" asked Graham, as they all stood in the lonely road.

Marietta was absorbed in gazing at her friend and did not try to talk.

"My dog pined—as I did," was the reply.

Marietta roused herself.

"I guess I shouldn't pine if I had a chance to make a long visit in New York," she said. "How's Mrs. Lander?"

"Better."

"Did she want to spare you?"

"No."

Dally turned and whistled to the hound, who came in long lopes from across a meadow, and who rapturously licked the hand held out to him, and then sat down on his haunches within touching distance of his mistress.

"And you might have stopped longer?" inquired Marietta, with incredulous wonder.

"Yes."

Dally looked with intent, smiling eyes at her friend.

"I'm a free creature," she said. "I can't be shut up in a city. Besides," here her face

took on a curious, melting softness, "aunty needs me, and I need her."

"She wants you, fast enough," returned Marietta. "I've watched her at meet'n. She has looked so solemn, sett'n in her pew all alone. And I knew she was thinking of you. She's always been bound up in you. And no wonder!"

Marietta now exuberantly flung her arms about Dally.

Graham turned away.

"This is mighty trying to a fellow standing by," he said, with a laugh.

Marietta looked at him round Dally's shoulder.

"You'll have to put up with worse things 'n this," she said, gayly; "won't he, Dally?"

Dally turned her head, that she might give a glance at the young man.

"That depends upon how bad he considers this," she answered.

Graham's eyes sparkled. His rather heavily moulded and too self-satisfied face was animated.

"I consider it horrible," he answered, "for a mere spectator."

Dally withdrew herself from Marietta.

"You must remember Marietta and I have loved each other a good while," she said, gravely, "and I have been away."

"I will go away—that I may come back."

Graham looked at Marietta as he said this, and she blushed, as was proper. She also wondered a little to learn that Thodor could speak in this manner. She didn't think it was like him. But he rose in her estimation.

After a few minutes Dally announced that she must go on. Now she had seen Marietta, she would not stop at the house, but walk on to Mr. Dodson's to find Barker. He did not know she had come home. Aunty had told her Barker must be well, for she had heard nothing to the contrary. Did Marietta know anything about him?

Marietta had seen Barker digging potatoes on the Dodson farm a week or two ago. She had taken pains to stop and tell him she had just heard from his sister.

"But I needn't have told him," said the girl, indignantly, "for he never answered a word. I don't believe he cares one way nor the other."

Marietta said it was too far for Dally to

walk. They would all "squeeze into the buggy, and Thodor should drive them."

Thodor said "certainly," and he assisted the girls in, and then sat down gingerly and uncomfortably between them.

The Dodson house and farm were a little nearer "wrack 'n' ruin" than they had been a few years before. Josephus Dodson still drove the "deepo' wagon," and had no time for anything else. He was just climbing into that wagon, although it was Sunday, when the buggy stopped and Dally came towards him.

Before the girl could speak Mr. Dodson informed her that he "was sure he didn't know where Barker was; he s'posed he was lazing round somewhere."

Graham stood an instant with his foot on the step of the buggy and his eyes on the slim figure in its plain, clinging dark gown. It was Mrs. Lander who had ordered that gown, and it possessed all the perfection which any raiment subject to her supervision must possess.

The grace of that figure seemed to be so great that Graham could not remove his glance from it. But he did take his place,

saying that Miss Jacobs was not what he called pretty at all.

Marietta looked at him with some contempt.

"Who said she was pretty?" she asked. "She is worse 'n' that. If you know her, you can't forget her a minute."

Thodor did not appear to consider the subject worth pursuing. He was very conversational on other topics, and remained almost an hour later than usual that evening, quite exerting himself to be entertaining.

Dally had gone into the Dodson barn in her search for Barker. She saw a thick-set, undersized young man, or large boy, sitting bent over something he held between his knees.

Barker turned his head with apparent unwillingness when he heard the girl's voice pronounce his name.

"So you're thur, be yo'?" he said.

He resumed his bending over a trap, as Dally saw it was. Her heart began to have that cold sinking to which it was accustomed when in this presence.

She put her hand on his shoulder.

"Are you at all glad to see me?" she asked, pathetically.

"Of co'se," he answered. But he was absorbed in the trap.

She sat down on a milking-stool. She looked at him with such intenseness that her features grew almost set.

With a quicker movement than was habitual, Barker lifted his head, and his sullen eyes fixed themselves on his sister's face.

He had never relinquished his dialect. Dally had begun to drop it from the day that Barker appeared.

"Do yo' want thur mountings?" he asked.

"I used to miss them," she answered, much startled by his question.

"Used!" he repeated, scornfully but heavily.

"I jest long fur thur mountings."

Dally rose quickly. She came close to him.

"Barker," she said, breathlessly, "why don't you come back to aunty's to live? Why don't you care for me, or — anything?"

Barker put down his trap and rose slowly.

He almost laughed as he turned his uncouth frame towards his companion.

"I ain't no sech er fule as ter be er carin'," he said. "I know er few things, I reckon." He picked up the box-trap. "Which way d' yo' make out as thur mountings lay from hyar?"

Dally pointed. Barker looked steadily at her hand. Then he walked out of the barn and down the lane behind it.

Dally's hound snuffed after his steps for a few yards, then stood looking and growling at the retreating form.

XV

MARIETTA'S LOVER

THEODORE GRAHAM'S new horse and buggy were standing in front of the Winslow house. The young man, in his best suit, had just run in to say he was going to drive to Boston. He should take an hour to go out to Cambridge and see Bill. Had they any word to send?

Immediately Mrs. Winslow began to gather together a bundle of winter flannels for the sacred person of her son. She did not feel that she could trust him to buy them of the precise quality best suited to his health. She bustled about. She wondered if Thodor would take a glass can of barberry preserve without breaking the can.

Meanwhile Thodor was standing in the little front entry with Marietta. It was cold. It almost looked as if it might snow, though it was still October.

"Reg'lar Thanksgiving weather," Mari-

etta said. Then she added that if mar should be kind of decent, she meant to have Dally there for Thanksgiving; Dally and the Widow 'Bijah, for it would be too bad to separate them. And Bill, of course. A real, old-fashioned time they meant to have —if only mar would be decent. But if Bill came, things would be sure to be right."

"You don't seem to include me," remarked Graham, with a laugh. Marietta thought he laughed a good deal that morning.

"You, of course," she answered.

He drew her closer.

"Why do you have any one but Bill and me?" he asked.

"Don't you like Dally?" inquired Marietta, beginning to bristle somewhat. "You've seen her consid'able with me in the last two or three weeks."

Thodor bent down and kissed his questioner. He laughed again. It seemed to his companion that his eyes were brighter than she had ever seen them. His heavy but manly face was animated.

"I'll bet you like her, after all!" she exclaimed.

Mrs. Winslow opened the door with her roll of flannels and her jar of preserve. She began to give directions to Thodor. No one had a chance to say anything more, for she completely occupied the time. The colt sprang off down the white, dusty road. Marietta stood for a moment looking after the carriage, her arms rolled up in her big apron. She shivered in the sharp air.

"There is certainly snow up to the north of us," she said aloud. "I almost wish I'd ben going in with Thodor. But then," with a smile, "he didn't ask me."

She gave one more glance down the road before going into the kitchen. This glance showed her the top of a soft blue felt hat coming down along the other side of the wall. She knew the hat. Her face brightened. She ran out and met Dally at the gate.

"Do come in!" cried Marietta, "mar's awful cross to-day. The quince marmalade ain't goin' right, and we've all got to ketch it. Sence you've ben grown up she's ben kind of 'fraid to go on so before you."

"I was coming to see if she had half a dozen quinces to spare aunty. We haven't as many as we thought we had."

The two girls entered the house. A hot odor of preserving grew stronger and stronger as they came to the kitchen. Mrs. Winslow was not there at the moment. Marietta sat down and resumed her work of peeling pears. Dally stood leaning against the table, watching the sharp knife go round the fruit.

"Mr. Graham came along just as I left home, so he asked me to drive with him, as he was coming this way. I had an errand at Mrs. Bailey's and stopped there."

If there were anything in the least perfunctory in Dally's manner or voice as she gave this information, it was not noticed.

Marietta exclaimed that she "hoped Thodor was odd enough not to mention that he had just seen Dally. And, come to think of it, it was out of his way to come from Farnham by the Widder 'Bijah's."

"He may have had business on that road," remarked Dally.

"Likely's not," was the careless response. "He's always stopping at Tifft's Corners; I s'pose he stopped there this morning. 'Tain't no matter, anyway."

"No," said Dally. "Do you think your mother can spare the quinces?"

She came close to Marietta as she asked the question, and placed her hand on her shoulder. There are a few people whose slight touch is a potent caress.

Marietta looked up, and her eyes met the eyes of her friend intently for an instant. She put out a fruit-stained hand and asked impulsively:

"Dally, what troubles you? And you're pale."

"Perhaps I am pale, but I'm perfectly well. There comes your mother."

She drew back quickly. She did not linger after Mrs. Winslow's entrance. In five minutes more she was walking homeward with a small paper bag of quinces, and Sam, the hound, was running by her side.

Marietta was tempted to leave her work and go "part way," as of old, with her; but she knew her mother would not allow that. So she sat and peeled and quartered pears, and wondered why there had been that look in Dally's eyes. She did not understand it at all, and she could not get it out of her mind.

Outside, the day grew more and more leaden, like a gloomy bit from November.

Sometimes the clouds would part in the sullen wind, and permit a pale ray to come down to the earth.

Along the roads that wound through high pastures, where the barberries were still red on some bushes, then down between meadows or cedar swamps, the colt was carrying the new buggy and his master towards Boston.

Almost into the teeth of the northeast wind the young man was driving. His gray ulster was pulled up to his ears and his cap drawn forward. He sat upright; and if the spirited young animal lagged, he slapped the lines on its back, and cried out almost ferociously at it.

Marietta would not have thought his eyes sparkling now. Instead, they had something sullenly ferocious in them, and his mouth was shut hard, making his face very unpleasantly square.

When he had driven ten miles thus, and his horse was steaming and heaving, he met a man jogging along in an old wagon. The man raised his hand imperatively and Graham pulled the lines. The colt stood quivering.

"Young man, you're killing your horse," was the stern remark. "You ought to be arrested."

Graham looked at the beast, which was shaking between the shafts.

"I'm a brute!" he exclaimed. "Serve me right to be shut up."

His face relaxed. The stranger looked at him as if wondering if it were safe that he should be at large.

As his horse now walked slowly on, Graham leaned back in his seat. Sometimes he would say aloud, as though it were a relief to him to speak and hear his own voice:

"Yes, I'm a brute, every way—a brute."

William Winslow was walking hurriedly across the campus when he saw Graham coming towards him. His first thought was one of anxiety.

"All right at home?" he called out before they met.

"All right a few hours ago, when I saw your folks," was the answer.

Then the two shook hands.

"But what in the world has happened to you, Graham? Have you chopped off somebody's head and come to confess to me?"

Winslow, still retaining his companion's hand, pulled him around so that the light fell more fully upon him. Graham met the looks somewhat defiantly.

After an instant he abruptly withdrew his hand and asked if he could see Winslow where there "wouldn't be any cursed interruptions."

Winslow's face became very grave immediately.

"We'll go to my room," he said; "I don't think any interruptions will get through my locked door."

When the two were in the room, Winslow stood by the mantel and watched his guest. He did not choose to hurry him by asking questions. With every moment that passed he grew more and more apprehensive, but he had no idea what he feared.

Winslow had grown to be a tall, slender man with a thin face, lighted by extremely brilliant and expressive eyes. These eyes were searching as well as brilliant. Perhaps his mouth was somewhat too full, but the breadth of his forehead and his thinness and pallor gave a suggestion of asceticism.

Just at this moment he might have re-

minded one of a young monk as he stood there looking at the other occupant of the chamber. Graham had sat down in a chair, thrust out his legs, and was now gazing at his boots.

Finally he looked up. He smiled, because it is rather a habit for human beings to smile when they address each other.

"I guess you begin to think I'm half drunk," he said, rather foolishly. He almost wished he had not come. A man always lost ground, somehow, if he didn't keep things to himself. You had to live up to a confidence some way.

"I don't think you are drunk at all," was the answer.

Graham got upon his feet. He looked fiercely about him.

"It gives a man a queer feeling to find he's a scamp," he said.

"Do you find you are one?"

Instead of replying, Graham took sharp hold of Winslow's arm.

"Winslow," he said, "was you ever in love? Don't you say anything yet! I don't mean that you liked a girl first-rate and thought she'd suit you. Had an affec-

tion for her—prettiest one you'd seen—guessed she'd make a good wife—thought you loved her. I don't mean any of that rot. I mean this"—here he unconsciously shook the arm he held—"Did you ever live—sleep—eat—drink—speak—in just one thought—not know anything but one feeling—be drunk with it—long to drive it away, but yet wouldn't give it up on any account?—Hug it—hate it? Good God! Do you know anything about what I mean?"

Graham's words stumbled over each other. His eyes blazed. His face was red.

He dropped the arm he had held and stood with his hands clenched and hanging.

His listener had become yet paler as he heard, and had compressed his lips.

"I understand," he said, after a long silence, "that it's not so you feel to my sister."

"No! no!" said Graham. "You see, I'm a scamp. And the worst of it is, I'd rather be a scamp and be damned than give up this. I don't know myself. I didn't know 'twas in me."

He did not speak so violently now, but with bitter emphasis.

Winslow remained rigidly quiet in his position by the mantel.

"And the woman—" he began, in a lower voice than usual.

Graham laughed, as men will sometimes laugh when they would rather give a cry of anguish.

"The woman hasn't got an idea anything about it," he said, "so far's I know. I haven't said a word. Of course she don't guess."

"Of course she does guess," interrupted Winslow. "Do you imagine you have had all this in your heart and haven't revealed any hint of it so that she would know? Women aren't so stupid as we are. What does Marietta say?"

"Say? Do you think anything has been said? She hasn't a suspicion, I tell you. She's too honest, too true—"

He stopped suddenly, and turned away. After a while he added, in a thick voice: "We're to be married New Year's, you know."

Graham sat down now, and leaned both arms on the table, bending his forehead to his hands.

He had not told who it was who had inspired this madness in him. He had not been asked. He could not recognize himself. Three weeks ago he had been comfortable and contented, and had supposed he was "in love" with Marietta.

How true it is that there is in each human being a "great deal of unmapped country" of which we have never dreamed! True, also, that no temptation, no circumstance, will ever bring out that which is not really in us, dormant, but waiting the touch. And many natures are never half awakened, either in evil or good.

Winslow, at last, left his position. He walked silently about the room. Occasionally he touched a book or a paper on his study table, not knowing that he did so. He read carefully a few lines of memoranda he had pencilled on a pad, and tried to know what they meant.

He came back to the mantel, and resumed his attitude there.

"Why did you tell me this?" he inquired, rather coldly.

Graham started.

"Why?" he repeated, blankly.

"Yes; why?"

"I don't know," furiously, "only that I'm a fool 's well as a knave."

"You needn't be angry with me," said Winslow. "I mean, what is to be the upshot of it all? Do you want advice from me?"

"Nobody follows advice; but give it, all the same," Graham answered.

"You know my sister is the right kind of stuff," said Winslow.

"I know it."

"Tell her all about it. Put it strong, as you have to me. Do as she says."

Graham's eyes began to glow with hope as well as with other emotions.

"She'll tell me to go. She'll settle it quick," he said. "But" — hesitating — "nothing 'll clear me. It won't be an easy thing to do."

"You're not in an easy place."

Something in Winslow's tone made Graham exclaim:

"You think I'm weak? Remember, no soul but you suspects this."

After a short time longer, during which very little more was said, Graham turned towards the door. He could hardly tell

whether he had done well in coming here. He stood with his back against the wall, and looked at his friend.

"You see," he began, abruptly, "Marietta loves her. She said one thing about her that hasn't been out of my mind. She said, 'If you know Dally you can't forget her a minute.' Odd, wasn't it? But true as death. You can't forget her a minute. Anyway, I can't. And I've done nothing but try since the moment I met her with her hound on that old Blake road. Marietta and I were driving there one Sunday afternoon, and Dally came round the corner. She had just got back from Mrs. Lander's in New York. Mrs. Lander has tried to have the girl live with her, but Dally says she loves Mrs. Jacobs, and loves the country too well. That's queer, too. Most girls would jump out of their skins at the chance that New York woman gives her. She isn't like any one else. She is—but you know her, of course, Winslow."

"Yes, I know her."

The answer came promptly. Presently Winslow added that he had known Dally since she had first come to Ransom.

Graham nodded. He was feeling a reac-

tion and a relief from the mood which had dominated him. A grateful sense of expansion came to him since he had spoken freely to Marietta's brother. He would have changed his mind about going and remained to talk further, but Winslow said he had an engagement at just this coming hour.

Graham set out to walk back to Boston. For some reason he did not feel himself nearly as much of a villain as when he had driven into town.

XVI

THODOR'S CONFESSION

GRAHAM walked vigorously back to Boston. As he thought of his interview with Winslow, he rather wondered that his friend had not seemed more moved. He had expected more indignation and more sympathy.

"He's a cold-blooded kind of a fellow, anyway," he said to himself, with something like a feeling of pride that he himself was not cold-blooded; he was capable of being carried away on the flood-tide of a passion. How intoxicating, how bewitching it all was! And what a bewildering zest the under-current of wickedness gave! The pendulum of his emotions was now swinging away from the agony of remorse which had possessed him as he drove into town.

He fell to thinking of the few moments when Dally had sat beside him in the buggy that morning. He had been quite noble, he

thought, in always restraining all hint of what he felt, while he was engaged to Marietta.

The complications, the different phases in one human being, are astounding. You might have said that Graham was a different man from that person who had nearly killed his horse by overdriving that morning, and in whom temptation and remorse were fighting. But this was only another side of him.

He strolled round in Boston streets. He looked in at shop-windows. He selected a hundred of the richest things he saw, and imagined himself presenting them to Dally as insufficient tokens of what she had inspired in him.

He lingered until night came. Instead of starting homeward, he went to a play, and sat through the whole of it, seeing Dally in every face, and hearing her voice in every tone. His being off alone in this way seemed like some desperate measure which made the girl nearer to him, or like some reckless debauch which, for the time, deadened all the feelings which made him unhappy.

When, a little before midnight, he started home, the colt went like a sprite along the

streets out into the long, white road which stretched away into the country. It was good wheeling. The excoriating northeast wind had died away, the clouds had gone, and the sky was full of stars. The "Big Dipper" was hanging low down at his right. Clear and frosty and invigorating the night was. There were almost thirty miles between Graham and his home. He would not be there before three, for the colt could not keep up this gait.

At first the young man dozed a little, wrapped up in the corner of the seat. But when he was within ten miles of Farnham he was fully awake, and thinking those miles would be very long. Houses and barns stood lifeless here and there. Not a light, not a movement. Sometimes a dog's bark sounded.

There was a light, however, near a long, low hen-house; a place Graham knew very well, and where he often came for finer breeds of fowl. The colt was walking. His driver leaned far out to look. In the thick darkness of a clump of young pines he stopped the horse, sprang out, and hitched him to a branch.

There had been a great many fowls stolen

in different places within the last few months, and the Graham hen-house had suffered. The selectmen of Ransom had sufficiently roused themselves to offer a reward of one hundred dollars for the taking of the thief.

Graham went silently and swiftly forward over the "mowing" towards the small bull's-eye lantern which some one was carrying. The light fell here and there in a confusing way.

Suddenly the light was extinguished. Graham stood still, thinking he had been seen or heard. No. Presently he heard footsteps coming towards him, and his eyes had now adjusted themselves to the dusky starlight.

There was somebody, with a bag swung over his back making for the road. The figure came straight ahead.

Graham stepped forward, and put a heavy hand on the shoulder nearest him.

"Hullo, old cove! I guess I've got ye," Graham said.

Then he shrank a little, but he did not let go his hold. The figure remained perfectly quiet, with that stolid effect as if it were a lump of wood.

It was Barker.

Graham could have sworn at himself for his folly in trying to catch this creature. But how was he to know that it was Dally's brother who was thieving?

If Barker were going to carry on this business, he (Graham) would far rather be ignorant of it.

"So it's you, is it, confound you!" he cried, shaking the shoulder he held. "Take back your chickens 'n' ride home with me."

He began pushing Barker ahead of him. That person writhed somewhat, and said, sullenly:

"I kin walk home."

"I know it; but you sha'n't walk. You've got to empty that bag and come along."

The youth writhed again, but he perceived that it would be useless to resist. He had to leave the fowls. He also had to get into the buggy and sit beside Graham, whose fingers tingled to thrash him, and who was also conscious of a strange mixture of tenderness and pity, for the sole reason that this thief was Dally's brother. He resented this feeling, but he could not get rid of it.

"So it's you, is it?" he said again, after

they had driven half a mile. "You know where our hens and turkeys go?"

Barker grunted. This was the first time he had come upon any real obstacle in his career. He did not appear to have mind enough to be sly, but still he was as cunning as any beast which is bent upon having its own way. He was dully furious now. But he sat bent forward, and did not look at his companion. It was curious what an infuriating effect this vicious inertness, which was one of Barker's characteristics, often had upon one thrown in contact with him.

For a moment Graham believed he could not resist the impulse to fling the vermin out over the wheel. He heartily wished he had not stopped when he saw that lantern light.

"I asked if it's you that's been stealing," repeated Graham, violently.

"Do you-uns reckon 's I'm er gwine ter tell?" at last responded Barker, hitching somewhat on his seat.

Graham tried to restrain the manifestation of his annoyance. He thought he would have given a great many dollars if Barker had been nothing to that girl.

"No," he said; "I don't reckon you're going to tell."

Nothing more was said until they had reached a point nearest the Dodson farm. Here Graham stopped his horse, and told his passenger to get out. Barker did not stir, save to raise his head and turn his eyes towards the young man's face. It was too dark to see very plainly.

"What do you want?" roughly asked Graham.

"I war jest er gwine ter say as Dally 'd feel mighty bad if yo' should be gwine ter tell er this."

Graham felt sick. He swore at the thing near him.

"Get out, you wretch!" he exclaimed. "Of course I sha'n't tell."

Barker climbed out. He grasped the wheel when he stood on the ground.

"I mout er known yo' wouldn't tell," he said, "'cos of Dally, yo' know."

He walked away.

"Look out, or you'll get hauled up by somebody that will tell!" shouted Graham after him. Then he whipped his horse that he might the faster put space between

him and Barker, who trudged on with his empty bag, a fire of hatred and revenge smouldering in his darkened consciousness. He was shrewd enough to be sure that this meeting would not lead to discovery. But he resented it all the same. He had been made to take back his plunder. He was making a little hoard of money. He knew where to dispose of his stolen fowls. It was a secret satisfaction to him as he slouched about the Dodson farm to know all the time that he had a bag of money hidden in the barn-cellar; and to know, also, that he had never been caught in his thefts. He gloated over the money and the way he got it. He bore Mrs. Dodson's constant scoldings in dumbness. Nevertheless, as he often told himself, he meant to pay that woman off. It suited him to stay there far better than it had suited him at Mrs. Jacobs's. He never went near the widow's. Dally came to see him. He wondered why she would come. He was in a good many places unsuspected; he saw a good many things which one would not have dreamed he saw. Meanwhile he did enough work for the Dodsons to be sure of staying there as long as he pleased; par-

ticularly as he never asked for any wages or for any more clothes than they gave him. Mrs. Dodson believed she controlled him, and he was willing she should continue in that belief.

The rest of the week went by, and Marietta began to wonder why Thodor did not call. She had not seen him since the day he had stopped on his way to Boston.

Mrs. Winslow made herself agreeable by frequently remarking that no young man would ever have dared to slight her so; and she wondered if Thodor had given them things to William. It would be jest like him if he hadn't thought a word of it. If William took his death-a-cold for lack of them flannels, it would be Thodor's fault.

Mr. Winslow made things worse by advising his wife not to fret. He s'posed Thodor was busy. Upon this he was asked if he enjoyed seeing his only daughter slighted, and his son likely 's not having pneumonia. As for her part, she had some feelin'; she had a mother's heart.

At this stage of the discourse Mr. Winslow so far forgot himself as to say, "Oh, Lord!" Then Marietta looked reproach-

fully at him, and pressed his foot under the table as she passed him the hot biscuit. He dejectedly took a biscuit. Marietta said briskly that for her part she wasn't worried one grain about Thodor. She guessed he'd turn up all right. If he didn't, they'd all try to bear it.

Mrs. Winslow now announced that if Marietta could bear the disgrace of gittin' the mitten from her beau, and she er fixin', why, her mother couldn't. And she began to eat crusts with marked ostentation—a sure sign of a serious storm brewing.

Marietta followed her father to the woodhouse after supper to tell him that if Thodor let another day go by without calling, she should have to send for him, just to pacify mar.

Mr. Winslow leaned on his axe and looked at the girl.

"There ain't nothin' amiss between you 'n' him, is there?" he asked.

"Not a thing," she answered. "It's often been as long as this without his coming."

Her father shook his head. "We couldn't live here with yer mar," he said, emphatically, "not if Thodor stopped coming."

Marietta laughed. Nevertheless she was glad when, in the evening, she heard the well-known trot of the colt. Mrs. Winslow heard it, too. She rose from where she was stringing apples to dry, and said she would immediately light a fire in the air-tight. This fire in the air-tight in the sitting-room was always ignited in honor of Graham. If Mrs. Winslow had not approved of him, her family felt that it would have been almost impossible to have had that fire.

Now, by the time the young man had put his horse in the barn and tucked the blanket on him, the sheet-iron stove was almost red hot.

Marietta greeted him as usual. When he came forward into the light, and had taken off his great-coat, she asked him if he had been sick. He looked so. Had anything happened?

He stood in the middle of the room. His face was careworn and resolved. He took Marietta's hands and drew her nearer.

"When I was here last I made up my mind I would not come again until I could tell you something that's on my conscience that you ought to know. I thought I should

see you the next day after I'd been to Boston, but I couldn't quite do it. You see, I hung back like a coward."

He felt the girl stiffen a little as she listened. But she kept her honest eyes on his face while he spoke.

"If it's something I ought to know, tell me right away," she said.

He hesitated. It is hard to tell a woman who expects to be your wife that you love some one else better.

She saw the intensity of his unhappiness, and she also became pale.

"Can I help you any?" she asked.

"How can any one help me?" he cried. "I am dishonest! I love some one else. I could not help it. It sprang on me like a wild beast! It would have me! Don't think I yielded without a struggle!"

He still kept fast hold of her hands, and she was obliged to stand there before him. She was now quite white. It was a moment before she said:

"It is Dally."

"It is Dally," he repeated, with a great gentleness.

Marietta succeeded in releasing her hands.

She clasped them together. She recalled with a piercing thrill the expression that had been in Dally's eyes that morning when Graham had gone to Boston. Not one shadow of suspicion concerning her friend crossed Marietta's loyal heart. But perhaps Dally loved Graham—perhaps—Marietta tried to shut her mind to all suppositions.

"You blame me?" humbly said Graham.

His companion now looked fully at him. But her voice, when she spoke, was not as steady as her glance.

"Blame you—or any one—for loving Dally?" she said. "Oh, no! How could you help it? How could you help it? Oh, I love her so much myself!"

She turned away and sat down, covering her face with her hands. Mingled with her own personal emotions was a wild thought of her brother. What did he now think of Dally? He had never told her. She did not know but that he had forgotten her since he had been at college. She was sure that, as a boy, he had a strong affection for her. But boys change so. She had sometimes fancied he had seen some one else; she had never had his confidence in this direction.

He would not have told any one. Always, when he came home, he visited Dally. But that went for nothing, for they were old friends. That fact did not make against his having forgotten her in the sense Marietta had in mind.

She tried to think clearly. It was all over now between herself and Thodor. That was clear enough.

XVII

THE TWO GIRLS

"SIMPS to me," said Mrs. Winslow the next morning at breakfast—"simps to me Thodor didn't stay's long's usual last night, Marietta. I heerd him git out his hoss 'n' go away. I didn't sleep a wink myself, anyhow."

Mrs. Winslow was not now eating crusts, but partaking freely of the best there was on the table. The fact that her daughter's beau had resumed his visits in some mysterious way released her from the necessity of chewing crusts for nourishment.

Marietta did not reply. She industriously and silently stirred her coffee. Her father looked at her anxiously. He tried to restrain any comments until he and she should be in the wood-house.

"I didn't sleep a wink myself," repeated Mrs. Winslow, in an aggressive tone. The inference to be drawn from her manner was

that if Mr. Graham had made a visit of the customary length, she should have enjoyed her customary repose.

"I wish you'd pass me the bacon," said Mr. Winslow, in a melancholy voice.

His wife passed him the bacon. As she set the dish down rather emphatically on the table again, she remarked that "Marietta didn't look's if she'd slept a wink, nuther."

The girl flushed sensitively as she protested that she was as well as she had ever been in her life. Again her father looked at her, and again he wished they were in the woodhouse, so that he might try to comfort her if she were in trouble.

No one noticed the proclamation of the fact that Mrs. Winslow had not slept. She was in the habit of asserting that she had not closed her eyes during all the dark hours. Mr. Winslow had been known to make the counter-assertion that "at any rate, she had snored awfully." But he was always sorry when he had been so indiscreet.

When they rose from the table, instead of beginning to gather the dishes together, as was her custom, Marietta said she was

going to run over and see Dally a few minutes. She did not ask permission. She quickly put on a jacket and hat.

Her mother stared in astonishment. She said: "The work wa'n't done up yet."

"Let the work stand," said Marietta, and walked out of the house.

Mrs. Winslow told her husband that "she didn't know what she'd done to have such a gal's that; Marietta was jest like her father. But William took after his mother's side of the house."

As soon as he dared, Mr. Winslow went to the barn. He saw his girl walking rapidly across the upland pasture through which a path led "across" to Mrs. Jacobs's house. She was almost running.

The man watched her until she had reached the ridge and disappeared below it.

He turned heavily towards the barn.

"It's goin' to be awful tough here when she's married," he said, in a loud whisper. "I d' know how I'm goin' to stan' it."

Marietta actually broke into a run as she went down the slope. The brown sweet-fern, which she crushed beneath her feet, sent up its odor; the juniper bushes gave

forth their perfume, which always made the girl think of the old gin-bottle in the kitchen closet, although she did not know that juniper berries were ever put into gin. It was yet too early in the morning for the late October mist to have left the meadows and low places, but the sun was shining through it, and it was growing less and less dense. The crows were flying—"flying to the left," thought the girl, recalling the saying that when crows fly to the left it is a sign of bad luck. The chickadees were calling. Marietta had a dim sense that the world was lovely and full of promise.

When she had started she felt that she could not reach her destination quickly enough. Now, when she saw the roof of the widow's house, she began to move more slowly. She was panting. Her mind was confused. She wondered what she should say to Dally. Though she had hastened, now she shrank.

She leaned against a chestnut-tree and tried to become composed. Her heart was very sore. She wished she might see Bill a few moments. It might be a comfort to see him. If her mother were only different!

But, as her father so often said, her mother "was jes' 's she was."

As Marietta stood thus, she saw Dally and the hound come round from the back of the house. Dally had no covering for her head. She had evidently come out for a moment to look about over the hills, and see the mist and the sunlight. Her hair was loosely fastened, as usual. The morning light shone on it and made it radiant. Marietta was near enough to see her friend's face, and the sight of it gave her heart that throb of almost impassioned tenderness which was so ready to be awakened by this presence.

Did Dally guess what she had always been to Marietta? The New England girl's life had been in a measure restricted and meagre. She turned thirstily from the very first to Dally, who suggested vividly the dreams and the enchantment which are the birthright of youth, though the youth of many is so austere as to be deprived of such romance.

No one else had ever caressed Marietta as Dally had done, and Marietta felt that she could have received such caresses from no one else. For her they were a part of Dally's personality.

Now, as she looked down at the girl and her dog, in the bitterness that was natural in such a position as hers, there was still her love for Dally. But there was bitterness. Why had such a thing happened to her? She had looked forward with satisfaction and happiness to a home with Graham. She should make him an excellent wife; they would have a pleasant home; the arrangement was precisely right in every way. But now she was rejected, and rejected because of that girl who was standing there with the October sunlight on her, with the dog who seemed so joyous just to be with her.

If it had not been a grand passion she felt for her lover, Marietta was convinced that it was something which justified her in thinking of marriage with him. She must bear that disappointment, besides the wound to her vanity, and it is surprising how deep a hurt one may receive simply through one's vanity.

When Dally had gone into the house, Marietta slowly climbed the wall and crossed the road. Sam, who had remained outside, gave a bark of welcome. Immediately the porch door was opened by the Widder 'Bijah, who had grown a little heavier and her hair a little

thinner in the passing years. But she looked happier than she had ever looked. She had gradually increased her monthly contribution to foreign missions. She bought more tickets for all the entertainments to raise money to get the church painted or to procure a new organ. She had paupers, who thought they needed a change from the poorhouse, to stop with her for a week at a time, oftener than used to be her custom. Children found her even more generous with cookies and apples than in former times.

"If I can't do a hand's turn for anybody," she said, "I must be a ruther mean specimen. I've been blessed mightily."

She would look at Dally as she said this, and Dally's glance in return repaid for all.

The widow had not been called upon to endure the trial of seeing Dally taken to New York by Mrs. Lander, and so being lost to her country home. Mrs. Lander had tried to take her, but Dally had resisted so strenuously that the lady could not have her way in this.

Two or three times, when Mrs. Lander had been in feeble health, the girl had stayed with her for several months, and had not yet

outgrown the charm which this woman always exercised over her. But there was something of the savage in the Southern girl, something which was fretted and chafed by what seemed to her the imprisonment of life in a city, and her love and gratitude to Mrs. Jacobs clamored for her return to her home. No other place was home to her. The simplicity and singleness of her nature made it impossible for any roots to strike into other soil.

Marietta entered the kitchen, which seemed very warm to her after her run across the pasture. The room also had a strong odor of coffee and sausages. In a corner by the cook-stove sat an old woman, whose head trembled all the time, and who, when she inquired after the girl's mother, laughed a good deal. She laughed a good deal every time she made any remarks; and as she made remarks almost constantly, she was a very confusing member of a family circle. This was "Old Aunt Judson," whose habitual dwelling was the almshouse, but who was now in the second week of a visit to the widow.

After she had asked for Mrs. Winslow she

gave a more than usually significant giggle, and said she "s'posed Marietty hadn't got through fixin' yet."

"No, ma'am," said Marietta, and hurriedly turned to ask for Dally.

But old Aunt Judson went on to say that she considered that Marietta "had got one er the best ketches anywheres about." She counselled her "to hold on to him." She began to enter garrulously into a description, garnished by much laughter, of what a "ketch" Joe Judson had been considered when she married him, "more'n fifty year ago."

What with laughing and trembling and eagerness to talk about "beaux," this pauper gave Marietta a feeling that she must turn and run out of the house.

Mrs. Jacobs had opened a door into "a chamber-way" and called "Dally!" up the stairs, and the girl appeared almost immediately.

She glanced at Marietta, then said she must come to her room, she was just making her bed.

Once in the room, with the door shut behind them, Dally led Marietta to a quaintly-

draped "barrel chair" by the window, and as her guest sat down in it, Dally knelt at her side.

Marietta suddenly bent her head forward on her friend's shoulder and exclaimed:

"He told me last night!" Dally's eyes seemed to suffuse, not with tears, but with some sharp emotion. She became red, then white.

She did not ask what he had told. She sat quite still, pressing Marietta's head to her shoulder and resting her cheek on her hair.

"He was there two hours. He never talked of anything but you."

Marietta's voice was muffled by her position. After a moment she said:

"Did you know it?"

Dally replied with characteristic directness and truth:

"Something in his manner made me guess it. I do not think he meant me to know it."

"You had guessed it that morning you came for quinces, and he had brought you part way?"

"Yes."

"You were troubled?"

"Yes."

"I remember how you looked at me," said Marietta, more excitedly. "I kept wondering what that look meant. You were sorry for me?"

"Yes; and for him, too."

"For him? Oh, yes, of course you were sorry for him!"

Marietta was yet more excited. She raised her head. She kissed Dally vehemently.

"I wouldn't misjudge you for all the world!" she cried, and clung faster to Dally, who, though capable of much deeper and more violent emotion, did not yield herself up so readily.

There had been but one resolve clear in Marietta's mind when she had started out this morning. That resolve was to ask Dally if she loved Graham. But now she found it impossible to put the question. Dally's nature was as pellucid as the clearest lake, but yet Marietta could form no guess upon this subject. It was natural, however, for her to think that she did, or would, return Graham's overwhelming passion. And how she would love! Thus Marietta thought as

she sat looking at her friend, who was still on her knees beside her, holding her hands closely with the touch and the tender grip of one who has the wish and the power to comfort.

And Marietta was comforted, though not through any spoken words. She could not help thinking how strange it was that the girl who had supplanted her in her lover's heart was the one to whom she should look for sympathy and strength.

"I don't know what I should do without you," she said, with a sob. "Mar's worse 'n' nothing, and I can't go to par in this kind of trouble, somehow. He'd pitch into Thodor horrid, and I don't blame Thodor. 'Tain't in me to blame any one for loving you. But it's all awful. And only think, he went to see Bill and told him all about how it was."

A kind of vibration passed through Dally, but her gaze did not flinch.

"Bill told him to come and tell me. He said I was the right kind of stuff, and would do right about it. Bill always did believe in me," with a forlorn kind of pride. "And I hope I shall do right. Thodor offered to stick by our engagement and try to get the

better of—of this love for you, but I wouldn't have that. No, indeed; I guess I wouldn't. He's just as free as if he'd never met me."

Marietta felt her lips suddenly closed by a tremulous and lingering kiss. To her surprise she felt tears on Dally's face.

"He isn't worthy of you," whispered Dally.

Marietta stayed another half-hour in the little chamber. But very few words were said. Sometimes Dally's hand stroked her friend's face softly. It was inexpressible comfort to Marietta to look long in Dally's eyes. Those eyes were at once so soft and strong. Above all, they were sympathetic.

When Marietta went down into the kitchen again, old Aunt Judson roused from a nap and called quaveringly after her "to be sure 'n' hold on to her beau."

Marietta tried not to slam the door. As she was shutting it the old voice could be heard saying, shrilly,

"You won't find no such ketch nowhars else."

XVIII

MRS. WINSLOW'S NEMESIS

MR. PETER WINSLOW knew whereof he spoke when he said to Marietta that "they couldn't live with mar if Thodor should stop comin' there."

And now Thodor had stopped.

At first Mrs. Winslow maintained a silence on the subject. She kept saying that Marietta was "jest like her father 'n' his folks, but William was jest like her."

Although such remarks did not apparently refer to the discontinuance of Graham's visits, yet Marietta and her father knew they were inspired by that fact.

The girl took the first opportunity to confide, of course within the precincts of the wood-house, to her father that she and Thodor had both thought it was best to break off the engagement.

Mr. Winslow was greatly prostrated by this intelligence. He did not want his daugh-

ter to be married, but he would have liked an arrangement whereby she might be continually courted by Thodor, so that Mrs. Winslow might be kept in a good humor.

He sat down on the chopping-block as if he had no strength to keep upon his feet. Marietta was standing by the door, with the same square of blanket on her head that she had worn as a child. Her father looked in a bewildered manner at her.

"Does your mar know?" he asked.

When he heard the answer "no," he groaned aloud.

"Who's goin' to tell her?"

Marietta said that she had been thinking they might get Bill to tell her. She was trying to write to Bill. She thought he could fix mar somehow. He always had, and she guessed he always would.

This reference to young Winslow seemed to give some comfort to both father and daughter. Mr. Winslow was presently able to get off of the block and begin to chop some "trash." He expressed the hope that "p'r'aps 'twas only a quarrel, and they'd make it up between um."

But Marietta firmly combated that idea.

She said "they wa'n't neither of um to blame; but they'd concluded the engagement would be better broke than kept."

Mr. Winslow tried to accept this as final. But he went round in such a very visible state of mental confusion that at the dinner-table that very day his wife made the intercession of Bill superfluous.

She said she knew something was in the wind. She never knew her husband to look quite so much like a fool as he did at this present moment. And Marietta didn't look much brighter. She laid down the knife with which she had been conveying squash-pie to her mouth. The manner in which she relinquished this implement made her hearers know that the onslaught was to be fierce and, possibly, prolonged.

Marietta made a sudden resolve.

Her mother went on to assert that she believed that what was in the wind had something to do with Thodor Graham and "that gal there," pointing a slice of brown bread at Marietta.

It was then that Marietta acted upon her resolve. She felt herself becoming rigid, but she was determined.

"Mother," she said, "Thodor 'n' I've broken it all off. We've made up our minds to be jest friends."

This was so much worse than Mrs. Winslow had imagined, that she in her turn began to be rigid.

It was several moments before she was able to speak.

She placed the brown bread beside her knife. She pushed back from the table. She looked over at her husband, who would not look at her.

"Mr. Winslow," she said, "was you knowin' to this?"

"Not until she told me," jerking his head towards his daughter, but not raising his eyes.

"Do you know the cause?"

"Only what she said."

The woman now discarded her chair entirely. She looked very large in body as she stood there.

"Well," she cried, "I know! I know the reason! I ain't er born fool, even if I did marry one. It's that Caroliny gal! She's the root of it. Oh, the sly one! She's ben settin' her cap, I'll bet a million dollars. 'N' Thodor's ben caught. I don't say I've

seen her at it. She's too sly. But she done it! She done it! I'm goin' right over there this very instant."

Marietta bounded from her own seat. She was terrified at this random guess of her mother. But she knew that if a burglary had been reported it was likely her mother would have maintained the probability that Dally had perpetrated the crime.

The girl sprang at the elder woman and caught hold of her arm.

"You're crazy!" she cried; "you sha'n't go!"

Mrs. Winslow thrust her child aside. She was furious that young Graham had been lost. Of course he had been the one to break the engagement. No girl in her senses would have let such a "feller" go.

"I ain't crazy one grain," she answered. "I know what I'm about, if there ain't anybody else does. Marietta Winslow, how c'n you stand there 'n' hold your head up?"

She turned, and hastened into her bedroom, where she threw a blanket shawl over her shoulders. She emerged from the room in the act of putting a long white cloud many times round her head. Her face was now almost purple from excitement.

"Mother," said Mr. Winslow, anxiously, "you'll do yourself a damage if you ain't careful. You'll bust something in your head."

"Don't you speak to me," was the response, with great stress upon the last word of her sentence.

Marietta had disappeared. The moment her mother opened the outer door the girl joined her with her hat and jacket on. She was told "to go into the house this instant." But she did not obey. She walked on beside her mother, whom she informed that "if anybody was going over to the Widder 'Bijah's that day, she was going too."

This open rebellion added to Mrs. Winslow's rage and astonishment. To use her own words, she "felt as if the world was comin' to an end."

She walked as fast as she had ever done in her youth, when she had had less avoirdupois to contend against. By her side her daughter kept on her way.

It was not one o'clock. People had eaten dinner, but had not yet resumed work. The elder woman did not choose the pasture path, but went by the road.

Mr. Bailey, smoking his pipe in his yard, saw the two go by. He went to the corner of his house that he might watch them farther. He had intended to nod at them, but, though they seemed to see him, they gave no sign of recognition. He hurried into the house, and told his wife that "Peter Winslow's wife 'n' daughter 'd jest gone by like the very old scratch." He hinted that it would be well if Mrs. Bailey could make an errand over to Winslow's, and thus have a chance to discover "what was up."

The two kept up their rate of speed, and by the time they turned into the Jacobs yard Mrs. Winslow was panting so heavily that she was obliged to lean against the fence a moment. Marietta would have gone on to warn the household of what was coming, but she was held fast. When they did enter, by the porch, they saw Dally clearing the dinner-table, while Mrs. Jacobs was stirring with a wooden ladle something in a large iron kettle on the stove. The woman from the poorhouse, "old Aunt Judson," with the shaking head, had not yet finished her visit, and was sitting in the arm-chair where Marietta had seen her. The wrinkled face showed

signs of interest and eagerness as these two callers entered so abruptly. Mrs. Judson tried to whisper to her hostess that she guessed "that Mis' Winslow's temper was gittin' the best of her agin." The old woman almost smacked her toothless lips in anticipation of some kind of a scene. She grasped her chair-arms, and tried to hold herself still as she waited and listened.

The widow evidently strove to take a good hold of her self-control. She turned and put some chairs for her visitors. She told Mrs. Winslow that she was trying out her leaf-lard, but she didn't think it would be as white as it should be to be the best kind.

Marietta caught hold of Dally's skirt as she was taking some dishes to the sink. She made her mouth form the words, "Dreadful time!" But Dally did not need this information. She had seen Mrs. Winslow's face, and was fighting with herself. Something of the old furious sense of injustice and hatred, which this woman had roused in her as a child, came again to her. She had the impulse to spring upon her now as she sprang upon her when the attempt had been made to take the puppy away.

Marietta, glancing fearfully at Dally's face, was freshly alarmed at what she saw there.

Mrs. Winslow could not waste her time in any reply to Mrs. Jacobs's remark about her leaf-lard. She did not wish to say a word that should not have a barbed point to it. And she had an unaccustomed fear lest when she began to speak she should stammer. She did not know what that meant.

She could not see anything but old Aunt Judson's trembling head the other side of the great kettle of fat; it seemed to her that it was because of that head that she found forcible speech so difficult.

Every instant she thought the right word would come.

"You ain't 's well 's common to-day, be ye?"

Mrs. Jacobs, as she asked this question, turned, with the stick held over the pot and dripping fat.

"I'm jest 's well 's I c'n be," burst out Mrs. Winslow. "I had ter come—Thodor Graham!—that gal done it!—she done it—she—"

Dally had wheeled round, facing that unwieldy form and that crimson countenance.

She stood erect and quivering. The wild, panther-like blood in her was boiling as it had hardly done since this same woman had provoked her before.

But, as she looked, her attitude seemed to change without the moving of a muscle. She stood the same, but her aspect was different.

Mrs. Winslow was still saying, thickly, "She done it," but her lips were clumsy. Her face had become contorted, her head began to loll, and her hands fumbled at her neck.

Mrs. Jacobs's ladle fell into the kettle with a splash that sent some hot fat on to Aunt Judson's cheek.

The widow took hold of Mrs. Winslow's shoulders, and sustained them against herself while she tore open the gown at the throat.

"Dally," said Mrs. Jacobs, clearly, "ride the horse to the Centre for the doctor. Mis' Winslow's got a stroke."

Dally was half-way to the barn before the sentence was finished. It was hardly a moment before she had the bridle on the horse and was galloping him, bare-backed, out of the yard.

Marietta stood up helpless until she re-

ceived two or three concise directions, which she obeyed.

In a short time the two had laid the woman on a mattress on the floor, and propped her head high. A mustard-plaster was put on the back of her neck and on the soles of her feet. Her face kept its dreadful color, and her breathing its sound.

"It's all we can do now," at last said Mrs. Jacobs. She looked at Marietta, who was wringing her hands and making a little moaning noise.

"Run over 'n' tell your father to bring his express wagon with some mattresses 'n' pillers," she said, mercifully giving the girl something to do.

Marietta turned to the door. She came back and asked, in a whisper:

"Is she going to come out of it?"

"I guess she'll git some better, anyway," was the reply.

Marietta ran across the pasture towards her home. How could she help it that, amid all the horror of the moment, there was an unmistakable feeling of relief? She would take care of her mother for any length of time; nobody ever had better care than her

mother should have. She knew her father would do everything he could, too. Marietta was shocked, but how could she be smitten with grief? She felt very wicked because she could not overcome that feeling of relief. It was in vain that she tried to put it from her. She kept thinking of the peace and freedom of the household if its mistress should continue helpless. Her mother had never been tender with her. All the tenderness in that heart had been given to William, who "was just like the Joneses."

She found her father in the barn, foddering the cows.

"Father," she cried out, "mar's got a stroke!"

Mr. Winslow had his pitchfork loaded with hay. He dropped it.

"I don't believe it," he said. "There wouldn't no stroke dare—"

Then he saw his daughter's face, which told him the truth more plainly than her words had told it.

XIX

DALLY'S ANSWER

THE Jacobs neighborhood became reconciled immediately to the fact that Mrs. Winslow had had a "stroke," and could not now move the left side of her body. One man went so far as to say that it must be "a massy to her husband" that her tongue was so stiff she could only speak with the greatest difficulty. Peter himself went about his work with a very long face. He unconsciously made his face longer because of the relief that was in the very bottom of his heart.

Like his daughter, he felt a sense of wickedness on account of that relief; but the emotion persisted and grew. His wife was not dead. She was only providentially prevented from making the household unhappy. They could take care of her.

Mr. Winslow soon began to whistle as he sauntered around the farm. But if he saw

any one coming, he stopped whistling. A hundred times a day he told himself that the breaking-off of Marietta's engagement was "mighty lucky."

He had, however, an unformulated wish that the parting between the lovers might have been deferred until the falling of the stroke, when there would have appeared to be a definite reason why Marietta must now stay at home and relinquish the honor of being Graham's wife. As it was, the father could not help thinking that the whole affair was very mysterious. He communed with himself a great deal on the subject. Sometimes, when alone in the woods, "thinning out the trees," he would lean on his axe and say aloud that "gals was mighty curious things."

The closest observation he could bring to bear on his daughter showed her to be as cheerful as was consistent with her mother's condition. He would strike his axe very hard into the wood when he wondered if Graham could have ill-treated her.

If girls were curious, he felt also that boys were not entirely lacking in that quality. There was something about Bill he did not

understand. He was so manly, so controlled, and almost austere—and what was he thinking about that brought that vertical line between the straight brows?

The man decided that children were "tremendous puzzles" when they were grown up.

Young Winslow came home in response to the news sent him. His mother wept copiously. She was eager to say something to him. This something was finally found to be a question as to whether Thodor Graham had really delivered the flannels and the barberry preserve. She learned that they had been received, but not that Graham had forgotten them, and had afterwards forwarded the parcels by express.

The young man only remained through one day. His mother was in no immediate danger, and Bill said it was a bad time for him to leave his studies now.

He had a half-hour's interview with his sister.

Marietta thought her brother very much preoccupied. He kept walking about the room with his hands deep in his pockets.

Suddenly he stopped in front of her, where

she stood watching him. He put a hand on each shoulder.

"Dear old Met," he said, his familiar voice going to the girl's heart, "I hope you haven't been too hard hit."

She trembled under his touch, but she looked at him bravely.

"Not so hard that I sha'n't get over it," she answered. "Of course it hurts to be forsaken. But I sh'll stand it. Don't blame Thodor too much. He couldn't help it."

It was a great aid to Marietta to be thus near Bill for a moment.

After a short silence, still with his hands on her shoulders, the young man said:

"And she?"

"She isn't to blame, either," was the quick reply.

Bill turned away to the window, and put his hands back in his pockets.

"But what does she think of Graham? Has she told you? Do you guess?"

"She hasn't told me, and I can't guess. She said once that he wasn't worthy of me."

"That means nothing."

Marietta flushed in instant defence of Dally.

"It means that she meant exactly what she said," she exclaimed, hotly.

Her brother turned towards her with a smile that was full of affection and approval.

"Met," he said, "you're a trump!"

An hour later he told his sister that he should walk over to the Farnham station, and should stop at the Widder 'Bijah's. Then Marietta informed him that Dally was not at home. She had been sent unexpectedly to Fall River for a week to help a niece of Mrs. Jacobs, whose baby was sick.

As she said these words, Marietta looked searchingly at the face before her. She saw its disappointment, but she could not read clearly any farther.

It was on the fourth day after Mrs. Winslow's seizure that Theodore Graham called to inquire after her.

Marietta met him at the door, and told him that her mother could see no one. She was startled at the haggard expression of his face. He pushed by her, and the two stood in the sitting-room.

"I've been out to Chicago," he said, "since I was here last. Thought a little change might be good for me. So I shirked my

work and left. Didn't know but I might see things clearer if I got away."

He spoke very rapidly, and looked all about the room.

"Did the trip do you any good?" she asked.

"Not a bit."

She could not think of anything more to say, her visitor was so distrait. He kept pulling his left-hand glove off and on. Marietta was calm and self-possessed. She could watch the worn face that revealed the unhappiness of its owner.

"He is having a great deal worse time than I am," she said to herself. Then, aloud:

"I don't see why you should be so wretched now."

"No; I s'pose not. Women don't know much about love."

She was silent.

"Do forgive me!" he exclaimed.

She held out her hand to him. He took it in a tight clasp.

"Is she at home?" he inquired.

Marietta told him. He was evidently surprised, as if Dally could not be away, save at Mrs. Lander's.

When he left, ten minutes later, Marietta

knew as well as if he had said so that he was going straight to Fall River. The time had come when it seemed absolutely necessary that he must see Dally. He had thought he would wait a month or so; he imagined it would be more decent not to rush to Dally the moment he had left Marietta.

You cannot take a train from Farnham just when you feel inclined. The trains through such places appear to run more as a means of discipline to humankind than as an accommodation. But some of these trains do stop, and thus Graham was enabled to get to Boston, and then to Fall River by dusk of that same day.

He waited in a very small and very hot parlor for "Miss Jacobs" to appear.

He had not sent in his name. She did not keep him waiting. Very soon the door opened, and Dally entered.

Graham's face flushed swiftly at sight of her. It almost seemed to him that she must know he would have to come to her.

She also flushed when she recognized him; but she was soon very pale, and continued so through the interview.

"I am sorry to see you," she said, without any previous greeting.

He began with startling abruptness, and his voice was harsh:

"It's not fair, then, that I should be so glad to see you—so glad that I haven't any words. I've been mad for one glimpse of your face. That sounds sensational, but some sensational things are true. There's no other way to begin to express what's in me. I'm just mad for you. You've made a different man of me; you—"

Here Dally made a slight gesture. She was standing the other side of the table.

"I thought you had no words," she said, with a hint of a smile.

She did not know that she smiled. She was conscious only of a grave distress. But at the same time she was surprised that it should be such an impersonal feeling. She had suffered more keenly when her dog had a thorn in his foot.

Graham almost groaned.

"Don't laugh at me!" he exclaimed. "I tell you there ain't any words that express what I want to say. I had to come to you. I was driven on by something I couldn't resist. Dally"—he stepped to her side—"don't be cruel with me! Don't!"

Graham had never before felt the extreme limitation of human speech, as he was master of it. He could only look at her now, and his heart sent passionate pleading into his face.

"You're so hard!" he murmured, a moment later. The girl's face appeared remote and severe.

She stood very straight, and looked up directly in his face. Her hands were clasped behind her in the childish attitude Marietta and Bill would have remembered.

"Am I so hard?" she asked. "I do not feel so. I feel sorry that you hadn't the good fortune to continue to love Marietta. How blind you are! Blind!"

"But I love you," began Graham. He pressed nearer, but he did not dare to put out his hand to her.

"I do not believe it." Graham at first could only utter an incoherent explanation. It was monstrous that she should refuse to believe in the existence of something that was like a consuming fire to him.

"Not believe it?" he stammered. "How dare you say that to me?"

He lifted up his hands in a violent gesture.

He had never felt so tortured and so helpless. He was choking with his baffled passion.

"I say it because I do not love you one particle; therefore, it appears impossible that you should love me. I cannot conceive of a love not mutual. There may be a flaming up of some emotion, but it will soon die. If I lived a thousand years, I should never love you. You ought to have known it and have spared us both this interview."

She spoke very gently, but with extreme decision. Her face was softening now. She could not continue to look upon his suffering without pity.

He turned away, and was evidently making a great effort towards a degree of self-control.

"Why should I have known that you could never love me?" he asked. "Am I such a monster? You don't take much pains to help me bear the blow."

"I was afraid you might not see how impossible it is that I should love you. It seemed better to make it all plain at first."

"You have made it perfectly plain," re-

sponded Graham, with great bitterness. "I must be even more stupid than I have been if I could hope anything from you now."

He had a vague wish to assume an appearance of courage and manliness. He wanted to say something noble and magnanimous. She would remember him more pleasantly if he could leave her in that way.

He stood looking helplessly at her. He could not say one noble word. He could only gaze, with the intolerable certainty that he must go; that he must never look at her again in this way.

"It is very hard to leave you," he said at last, after several moments had passed in silence.

"But you should go," she returned, almost in a whisper. "It does no good for you to stay."

"Not the least good; only here I may look at you. You have no idea what it is for me to look at you, Dally."

The girl trembled at this. Her voice was unsteady as she said, hurriedly:

"Oh, you must go! I am so sorry! So sorry! Now go!"

She gave him her hand. As he took it he asked, piteously:

"Are you sure there isn't any hope for me?"

"Sure. Good-by."

"Good-by."

He hurried out of the room and into the street.

Dally stood a short time where he had left her. Her hands were pressed tightly together, and her eyes widely opened.

As she turned towards the door she was thinking:

"If Marietta had loved him with all her heart, she would be even more unhappy than I am. He will go back to her in time. Mrs. Lander says it doesn't make so much difference to a man what woman he marries. Can that be true?"

She held the door in her hand, lingering until she could join her hostess calmly.

XX

BARKER SETTLES WITH THE DODSONS

EVEN if old Aunt Judson's head did shake all the time, and if she did laugh in an almost imbecile manner, she had mind enough to take in the suspicion that Peter Winslow's wife had come over to charge Dally with something that day she, Mrs. Winslow, "got her stroke." And it was something about Thodor Graham and Marietta. She put this suspicion and the fact that "Thodor wa'n't a-goin' with Marietta now" together, and the two formed a very fructifying subject of thought for her.

She sat there by the hot stove for several days and thought. She talked a good deal about how Mrs. Winslow had looked and spoken that noon, when the blow fell upon her. It was all very interesting. But she couldn't make any remarks concerning the other part of the subject here at Mrs. Jacobs's house.

She had meant to continue her visit until after Thanksgiving, for, as she often asserted, "the widow's victuals jest suited her."

The desire to be where she could discuss with a sympathetic listener all that was in her mind proved greater than the desire for the victuals that suited her.

The afternoon before Thanksgiving she announced to Mrs. Jacobs that if it would be convenient she would like to be taken over to her niece Betsey's, in Smithville.

Dally harnessed the horse into the old covered wagon. Aunt Judson was wrapped up in shawls and quilts and "boosted" on to the back seat. Dally gathered up the lines and the whip, and Mrs. Jacobs told her to "be sure and not stop a minute in Smithville, for the days were so short."

Coming back alone along the lonesome way, over which the shadows were gathering already, Dally saw ahead of her a figure which she recognized. It was Barker. He was slouching as usual. He had an empty bag over his shoulder.

Though he must have heard the horse's feet and the wheels, he did not look round

until they stopped beside him and the girl asked him to get in, for she "could give him a lift."

He sat down beside her. She immediately became conscious of the old feeling of self-reproach because she was not, and could not, be glad to see him.

He did not look at her. To her great surprise he began talking. Again he asked her if she didn't miss the mountains.

She tried to be very gentle with him. She told him that she often dreamed of the mountains, and then longed for them.

"But we've found good friends here, Barker."

He grunted. He shuffled his feet. Then he said, almost with animation, and with some contempt:

"I know yer. You-uns done weaned from thur mountings." He now actually looked at her as he said: "You-uns is in lurv," with great derision.

Dally turned upon him savagely.

"In love! You don't know what you're talking about! Love isn't for me."

Barker hunched his shoulders and was silent. He wondered how she could fire up

so sometimes. It was so foolish, and it must require energy.

She whipped the horse. The darkness was now coming quickly on. Up above them in the dusk was heard the clanging noise of a flock of wild geese flying low down on their way south.

"I wish I war um," said Barker; "I reckon they be gwine ter thur South."

"Yes, they are."

Another silence, which Barker broke.

"I've gurt some reck'nin' ter settle with them Dodsons. I'm 'bout ready, I be. Thur's reck'nin's ter settle, an' I'll settle 'em."

"Barker, what do you mean?"

"I'll let yer know—I don't mean nothin'."

He drooped his head and did not speak again. Very soon he left her to go across the fields to the Dodson farm.

In fifteen minutes more Dally had driven into the barn and was unharnessing by the light of the lantern, which had been placed there for her. She was so depressed that she could eat little supper. She told Mrs. Jacobs a part of what her brother had said, and Mrs. Jacobs tried to restrain her anger

against the little wretch who, she supposed, was "just as God made him."

Before she went to bed, Dally walked over to inquire about Mrs. Winslow, and to take some citron preserve with which Mrs. Jacobs had had "extry good luck." "The poor critter likes to be remembered," said the widow; "'n' she can't do much more harm in this world now."

Marietta was tired from a hard day's work, cooking and cleaning. She was lying on the old lounge in the kitchen when Dally softly opened the door and came to her before she could rise. She felt her friend's cool hand on her forehead, and she put up both arms and drew Dally down to her side.

"I hope you don't get discouraged," said Dally.

"Your voice sounds as if you were discouraged yourself," was the response.

"I ought not to be, since I've just taken old Aunt Judson to Smithville," replied Dally, with a laugh.

"I'm thankful she's gone," exclaimed Marietta, fervently. "I couldn't go there and hear her tell me I better have held on

to Thodor Graham." Then, after a pause, "He went to Fall River to see you?"

"Yes. He understands now."

"That you can't love him?"

"Yes."

"Then it's true that you can't?"

"Yes."

Dally put her head down near Marietta's cheek.

"If he comes back to you some day, what shall you say to him?"

Marietta sat up, with her arm round her companion.

"I should say I didn't think we'd better be more than friends," she answered, with unmistakable decision.

Presently Dally went away. She opened the door again just as Marietta had kindled a lamp, and the light fell full on Dally's face. She had forgotten a message, which she now delivered. Her friend was impressed by the peculiar vividness of the eyes and mouth—the something haunting.

"Dally!" cried Marietta, "what are you thinking about?"

Dally smiled. "Just this moment, about the mountains."

"What mountains?" wonderingly.

"Why, my mountains in Carolina. Barker was talking of them. He seems to have them a great deal on his mind."

Marietta came to the door. "Isn't it too bad that Bill thinks he can't come for Thanksgiving to-morrow?" she said.

"Yes, it is. Now, good-night."

Dally did not fall asleep very soon when she went to her bed that evening. She was well, but slumber would not come before midnight. She was thinking about Barker and what he had said. She was always unhappy when she thought of him, and this night she was particularly so.

But at last she was asleep. It seemed to her that she was wakened almost immediately by some one pronouncing her name by her bedside. She started up bewildered. The late moonlight came in through her window and revealed Barker standing there.

She sat up and put her hand out towards him in fright and surprise.

"How did you get in?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Easy 'nough. By thur pantry winder. Didn't yo' hear yer houn' bark?"

"No. Oh, Barker, you haven't hurt my dog?"

"No," contemptuously. "He's in thur barn whar yo' shurt him. I curm to tell yo' I'm er gwine."

"Going? Where?"

"To thur mountings. I ain't er gwine ter live 'thout thur mountings no longer. I didn't reckon tu make quite sech er soon start, but that ole Dodson 'oman ain't bearable no longer, she ain't."

"Go down-stairs softly and wait for me. Don't wake aunty. I'll go out with you."

He went out as noiselessly as he had come. Dally had not dared to talk with him any longer there. She hurriedly dressed and wrapped a gray blanket from the bed about her. She joined her brother and the two went out into the frosty air of the November night. Moon and stars were clearly shining.

"Yo' mout er stopped inside," said Barker, ungraciously. "I ain't gurt nothin' to say, only jest I'm er gwine. If yo' wa'n't sech er pore thing an' in lurv, yo'd go with me."

A sudden wave of wild longing for those mountains where she had been so unhappy

came over Dally's soul as she heard those words. What if she should run away with Barker, and thus forever escape what had become a complicated life here?

She had in her so much of the savagery, the simplicity of the first woman, that she felt herself unable to deal with any of the simplest complications that arise in life. There was something dreadful to her in the fact that Graham loved her when he ought to love Marietta. She had asked herself if her sudden and prolonged absence would make matters right again. Of course Graham did not really love her, because, as she had told him, she did not return that feeling. But for the present he was under the delusion of passion.

Again she asked herself how it would be if she were to go with her brother? The wave of a rebellious wish to fly, she knew not where, only it must be to some mountains, rose yet more swiftly and powerfully.

Then it ebbed away with a strange suddenness, leaving her trembling with a perilous tenderness and an emotion she could not combat.

"I cannot go," she said, quietly. "I can-

not leave aunty. And how wretched we should be down there! Think of old Tid!" Dally shuddered. She took hold of Barker's arm forcibly.

"Why do you go? Why won't you stay here and be a respectable man? Come and live with us. Oh, why do you like such a life?"

Barker did not try to withdraw his arm. He gazed at the face near him.

"Yo' an' me ain't no ways erlike," he said. "But if yo' cared fur me as yo' make believe yo' do, yo'd go with me, yo' would. I know how 'tis. Yo' jest can't care, an' yo' keep er trying tu care. I don't wan't no sech."

He flung off her hand. His words had gone straight to her heart. She sobbed. He stood silent, still looking at her.

"Be yo' gwine with me? I've gurt money 'nough fur er spell, till I kin git more. Will yo' go?"

"I can't! I can't!"

He sneered. She tried to think of something to say, but she had no words.

"'Tain't no ways likely I'll ever see yo' ergain."

He turned away. She sprang after him and flung her arms about him, kissing him and again begging him to "come and live with them."

After a moment he put her from him and walked off a few steps. He paused to tell her she needn't worry about him. He could take care of himself. And "mabby he'd send her word some day."

He added, triumphantly: "Thur Dodsons 'll find I've paid um urp. I've fixed sumpin so't they'll find their house afire 'fore many hours; they will, cuss um! I ain't their nigger."

Now he walked off more rapidly than Dally had ever seen him move. She shouted to ask if he meant what he said. He broke into a run. He was gone.

She stood a moment as one stands who does not comprehend. Then it came fully home to her understanding that Barker had spoken truth. It was like him to revenge himself; and he had told her he meant to "settle a reckoning" with the Dodsons.

It was still some moments before any definite idea of action came. It was nearly four

miles to the Dodsons. It was quite possible she might ride there in time to warn them. Barker was sly enough. He would arrange to be out of the way before the fire would take entire possession.

Now Dally moved very quickly. She went to the barn and put saddle and bridle on the horse. The hound kept snuffing at her and whining. The wide barn door, flung open, gave her plenty of moonlight. She left the horse standing, and ran towards the house.

Mrs. Jacobs met her at the door with a light in her hand. She had heard Dally's voice shouting to Barker.

She could not do less than hasten Dally's departure. She dared not suggest getting some one else to go, for fear of the delay. It was a lonely road, between pastures and through woods, but Dally was a fearless rider.

When the girl and the dog had started, Mrs. Jacobs finished dressing, and, taking a lantern, notwithstanding the moon, she went down the road towards her nearest neighbor, who was Mr. Peter Winslow.

"He will harness right away," she said to

herself. "We'll rouse what folks we can. I sh'll go with him. We won't be more'n half an hour behind her."

Although Mrs. Jacobs was anxious, she did not feel really worried about Dally.

The old horse galloped on down the still road. He had had speed in him once, and when Dally was on his back he always responded nobly. The hound swept along by her side. The sound of the hoofs resounded.

With every moment that passed Dally felt her depression leaving. By the time she had ridden two miles, the air and the motion had made her almost gay with that primitive, elemental flow of spirits which can be inspired in one who goes through space on a horse's back. To all such influences this girl was peculiarly sensitive. Anything out of doors, untrammelled, appealed to something kindred in her. All untamed things seemed to find her of their own blood.

But as she mounted a hill within about a mile of her destination, her mind came back forcibly to the present. She could look down upon the Dodson house. One look was sufficient for her. She saw a small flame com-

ing up through the roof near the chimney. The rest of the building appeared to be resting tranquilly under the moonlight. The old horse went down the hill as recklessly as if he had been a colt.

XXI

CONCLUSION

AS Mrs. Jacobs had intended, it was not more than half an hour before she and Peter Winslow were following Dally. Marietta could not leave her mother; she stood in the doorway and watched the wagon as it rattled off. She wished she had been Dally, who had gone on horseback. As she turned back into the chilly kitchen with its one kerosene lamp she felt strongly that life was very commonplace.

Mr. Winslow whipped his horse a great deal, but, as he said, "the critter couldn't git her spavin limbered up short of about ten mild." Therefore it was, or seemed, a great while before they reached the top of that hill where Dally had paused.

When these two looked from that eminence, Mr. Winslow uttered a great exclamation and lashed the whip again on his poor

horse. The Dodson house had been burning so long that its roof had fallen in, and now it was the timber skeleton that was flaming.

They found Mr. Dodson running helplessly about the yard, picking up things and putting them down. In answer to anxious inquiries, he said he believed "Mis' Dodson was some bruised, or something. She 'n' Dally was out to ther barn; but as for him, somebody 'd got to have a head on their shoulders."

As Mrs. Jacobs turned impatiently away, Mr. Dodson added, as an afterthought of little consequence, that he "s'posed they'd ben burnt in their beds if it hadn't ben for Dally."

The barn was on the other side of the road. Its wide doors were opened. As Mrs. Jacobs hurried through them Mrs. Dodson came to meet her. She was wrapped in an old "comforter," and she looked more forlorn than ever. She grasped the widow's hands and cried out, tremulously: "She jest saved my life, she did! He was asleep on the settee in the kitchen, 'n' he dars'n't com up-stairs! But she did!"

She began to sob violently and hysterically. "He dars'n't!" she repeated.

Mrs. Jacobs shook her.

"Where is she?" she asked.

For reply, Dally's voice came cheerfully from a pile of hay.

"Here I am, aunty! Not much hurt, either. I was looking for you."

In truth, she did not look very much injured, though she did not rise when Mrs. Jacobs bent over her. The hound was lying close beside her, and flopped his tail heavily in greeting to the new-comer.

"I don't think the fire hurt me much," she said, eagerly, "for 'I put a wet towel round my head before I started up-stairs, and I crept on my hands and knees. It was after I got her out that a beam hit me, somehow. I am so thankful I could save her! So thankful!"

She shut her eyes as she spoke the last words.

Mrs. Jacobs was perfectly calm. She had Dally taken home. She sent back immediately for Mr. and Mrs. Dodson, but Mr. Winslow took them to his own house.

Dally was put on the bed in the room

leading from the kitchen, the same bed where she had slept when she had first come.

As she lay there, smiling with cheer at the widow, she said it was odd how much she had been thinking of the mountains lately. But she supposed that was on account of Barker. At his name she trembled, and was silent.

The doctor reached the house about daylight on Thanksgiving Day. He and Mrs. Jacobs were calmly cheerful.

Neighbors began to call to make inquiries. Mr. Winslow procured some one to stay with his wife, and sent Marietta over to help. It was Marietta who saw every one that called. Mrs. Jacobs sat by Dally. She had some knitting in her hands. She seemed to be knitting. Once Dally said:

"Aunty, you're letting down a great many stitches."

Sam, the dog, lay on the mat at the foot of the bed. Sometimes he would walk around to the side; then a hand would be put out to him. He would lick it, and lie down in his old place.

Mr. Winslow had ridden off about noon

to Farnham to send off two telegraphic messages. One was from Marietta to her brother. The other was from Mrs. Jacobs to Mrs. Lander.

The doctor had said: "She may live a few days."

Mrs. Jacobs sat day and night in her place. She prayed continually. Not that Dally might live, but that God would give his aid to a life without her.

It was God who was doing this; God who had let Barker do what he had done.

The woman never doubted that the hand of the Almighty was in it. But how should she bear it? Whether she endured the blow well or ill, it was coming. Over and over she recalled every incident connected with Dally, from the time the child had appeared at the gate that first day. The rain had been on her hair and eyelashes. The gate had been hard to open. Mrs. Jacobs saw again the tanned little hand put out from the cloak to pull at the latch. And the child had called for whiskey.

Such poignant anguish had never before come to this woman's life. She was constantly saying to herself:

"I've got to bear it. I've got to bear it."

She thanked the Lord fervently that she was getting into years. At sixty-three one cannot expect an overwhelming number of days and weeks and months to live. And at sixty-three one has lost all the elasticity which enables youth to rebound from sorrow. There is nothing to do then but to bow down and to endure.

Once, as the widow sat there going over all this in her mind, Dally opened her eyes and looked intently at her.

"Don't be too hard on Barker," she said.

Mrs. Jacobs shuddered.

"I'll pray not to be too hard," she answered, tenderly.

"I wanted to love him more," murmured the girl, "but, somehow, I couldn't." Then she went on, more quickly: "He couldn't guess that I should be hurt so."

She shut her eyes, and said to herself: "He's gone to thur mountings. How they used to look at sunrise and sunset! And always standing there!"

Many times an hour Marietta would come to the door and look silently in, holding herself quiet by an intense effort. If Dally saw

her, she smiled with the same melting glow of eyes that had so often penetrated to Marietta's soul.

The girl would move quickly away, then rush to the remotest part of the house, where she would wring her hands and cry out.

In that little room from which she had just fled in her anguish the girl knew there lay the one being in the world who could put a glamour on every-day life for her.

Marietta would have said she did "not know the words to it," but she was keenly alive to the fact of that indescribable "primeval magnetism" which was always a part of Dally's personality, and which had drawn and held the New England girl with unbreakable cords. As Marietta stood there in the far part of the house, the memory of how Dally had been to her from the very first—how warm, how sweet, how audaciously tender—overwhelmed her anew.

The next morning the man who took Mr. Dodson's place for the time brought Mrs. Lander. The telegram had reached her so that she could take the night-boat for Fall River.

Marietta was watching for her, and for an-

other. Mrs. Lander was wrapped in furs, and seemed like an invalid. She sat down in the sitting-room, and fixed her eyes on Marietta some moments before she spoke.

"They will let me see her?" she said, in a whisper. Then she leaned her head forward on her hands, and the elegant figure shook with a sorrow that its owner half-resented, but to which she must yield.

"She crept into my very heart," she said to herself.

The girl, standing near, tried to speak, but could not.

Soon Mrs. Lander went to her room. She became composed, and there came back to her something of that manner which was peculiarly her own, and to which Dally had always been so susceptible.

Dally's face lighted almost brilliantly when the lady bent over her and kissed her. But Mrs. Lander could not sit down there quietly. She glanced in wonder at Mrs. Jacobs. She felt suffocated. She left the room, but she was continually returning to it.

There was very little to do for Dally, and what there was Mrs. Jacobs did with a touch that was as firm as it was tender.

No one but Marietta knew that young Graham came every hour or two to the door to ask how Dally was; that he hung about in the fields near; that he drove furiously for a mile or two away, and then returned; that he was suffering.

It was in the middle of the second night. Mrs. Lander was walking softly back and forth over the worn sitting-room carpet. Marietta had for the moment fallen asleep in her chair by the stove. In the little bedroom Dally seemed to rest. The hound lay on his mat. Often he turned his head towards Mrs. Jacobs, who sat in her place.

Mrs. Lander heard a quick but guarded step approaching the house. She went silently and opened the front door. Will Winslow stepped over the threshold — or, rather, it seemed the ghost of him.

He was breathing heavily. Mrs. Lander held out both hands to him. He did not see them. He leaned against the wall, his eyes on her eyes.

She seized his coat. Her heart melted at what she saw in his gaze. Here, indeed, was agony.

"She is yet with us," she said. "But, oh, why are you so late?"

"The message was delayed. I came the first moment. Oh, I could have walked faster than the cars moved!"

He was greatly broken. He tried hard to become partially composed.

"I must see her."

Mrs. Lander's perception was rarely at fault. She did not linger or make any inquiries as to the fitness of what she did. She took Winslow's hand, and led him straight to where Dally lay.

Mrs. Jacobs just glanced at him; he saw nothing save the face on the pillow. He bent over it. Dally opened her eyes, and met the look pouring upon her. She put out her arms. Her face was suffused with a love so absolute that it seemed almost to smite with its glory those who saw it.

"Oh, my God!" cried Mrs. Jacobs, under her breath. "Has she loved him so?"

As for the man and woman, they said nothing.

No need now for Winslow to explain how he had resolved to wait until his graduation before he offered his love in set terms. No

need to tell of his doubt and his suffering when he knew of Graham's passion. No need to make it understood that he had wanted her to be free to accept that passion, if her heart so prompted.

Winslow felt that there was no need of anything more on this earth.

Mrs. Lander had left the room. For the first time Mrs. Jacobs turned to go, that these two might be alone. But Dally's voice called her, and the voice was almost strong and quite joyful.

"Don't go, aunty," she said. "You see Bill has come."

She put out one hand to Mrs. Jacobs; her eyes remained fixed on her lover's face.

For a moment nothing seemed to stir in the room, save that the dog came from his place and put his nose up on the bed.

"Sam is glad, too," whispered Dally.

A few days later, and Marietta had gone back to her home and to the care of her mother. It did not seem as if anything had changed, save in her heart.

Mrs. Lander went to New York. She tried to take Mrs. Jacobs with her for a visit, but the widow said her place was there as long

as she lived, and that perhaps God would not make her live a great while.

When the depot carriage had driven off with Mrs. Lander, Mrs. Jacobs sat down in her old rocker and looked about her. To her, also, it seemed as if nothing had changed save in her heart.

Dally's dog came walking slowly from the bedroom, and placed himself at her feet. He looked up at her and whined.

THE END.

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